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Give us our Rights!

Or,

A
L E T T E R
TO THE PRESENT ELECTORS OF
Middlesex and the Metropolis,
S H E W I N G
WHAT THOSE RIGHTS ARE:
A N D T H A T,
ACCORDING TO A JUST AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION,
MIDDLESEX AND THE METROPOLIS
ARE INTITLED TO HAVE
F I F T Y M E M B E R S
I N
THE COMMONS' HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT;
F O R T Y O F W H O M
A R E N O W P L A C E D T H E R E B Y
DECAYED CINQUE PORTS AND ALMOST UNPEOPLED BOROUGHES;
T O T H E P E R P E T U A L N U R T U R E O F
C O R R U P T I O N,
A N D T H E R U I N O F
T H E S T A T E.

By JOHN CARTWRIGHT, Esq;
MAJOR to the NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Regiment of MILITIA.

*For the Leaders of this People cause them to err; and they that are led
of them are destroyed.*

*Woe unto them that decree unrighteous Decrees, and that write Griev-
ousness which they have prescribed: to turn aside the Needy from
Judgement, and to take away the Right from the Poor of my People.*

ISAIAH ix & x.

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T O

Dr. JOHN JEBB, CAPEL LOFFT, Esq;

A N D

Mr. GRANVILLE SHARP.

GENTLEMEN,

AS indefatigable fellow-labourers in the great work of vindicating the violated rights and betrayed liberties of our country, I use the freedom of inscribing to you the following Letter to our fellow-citizens in and around the Metropolis.

In doing this, I mean not only to do honour to myself, by boasting of your friendship and of your concurrence with me in sentiment on all essentials of our constitution; but I hope also to serve the cause in which I write, by adding to the number of those who know and revere you, as men who, with minds elevated above the mistaken pride and the selfish interests of the world, are inflexibly just to the rights and dearest interests of humanity and freedom in every country and in every clime.

DEDICATION.

Having myself invariably found you faithful advisers, preferring to all other things an adherence to justice and to truth, as the only laudable policy and wisdom of man in every situation, and his true road to liberty and happiness; so I may confidently refer to your several writings, all those who shall doubtingly peruse the following pages, for a confirmation of the truth of this fundamental and vital principle of our government, that AN EQUAL AND UNIVERSAL REPRESENTATION IN SESSIONAL PARLIAMENTS, is essential to the freedom of the people.

Nor would it be doing justice to a very acute and animated writer, who has rendered essential services to this great question, were I on this occasion, to omit the name of Mr. Northcote.

Your grateful and sincere friend,

JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

P R E F A C E.

IN order to prevent any misconception on the part of the reader, it seems proper to say, that when the following letter went to press, the writer did not foresee a removal of ministers so *soon* as that event actually took place; and likewise to explain, that excepting a few alterations which the state of politics and parties since Christmas made necessary, the letter has been above six months written. As, upon the immediate subject of it, no alteration, no amendment has yet taken place, it cannot be *impertinent*; and although he trusts and believes, that no Administration can now be formed out of the opposers of the late pestilent ministry, that will not, that must not have REFORMATION for its basis, perhaps it may not be *useless*. Its intention is, to shew the *rights* of the PEOPLE, and the *duty* of STATESMEN with regard to those rights.

The removal of wicked ministers can produce no permanent effects, unless followed up by an immediate overthrow of CORRUPTION. It was *corruption* that so long supported such ministers, and enabled them to plunge their country into the depths of calamity, and to bring it to the very
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brink of ruin and despair, before the torpid beings who fill the Commons' House of Parliament could be roused and stimulated to a sense of their duty. *Corruption* therefore is what we have most to dread. It must be torn up by the roots, hewn to pieces, and cast into the fire of reformation to be utterly consumed, or we are undone. Of so generative a faculty is it possessed, that if but a branch, a sprig, a bud of it escape the fire, wherever it falls 'twill again take root, and flourish as luxuriant and rampant as ever. The *Septennial* and the *Triennial* Acts, and the *Statute of Disfranchisement* of the 8th of Hen. VI. must be cast into the flames. They are the disgrace, as they have proved the curse of our country. They carry slavery in every line, and every word is a link in the chain that binds us. Once freed from these fetters, nothing then remains wanting to secure our freedom but a single bill, such as that of the Duke of Richmond in 1780, for regulating the detail of elections.

GIVE US OUR RIGHTS, *and then all will be safe!*

Believing that God is wiser than those crafty statesmen, those worms engendering corruption, who substitute, as a rule of human action, their *expediency* for his *justice*, I am so far from thinking that *new* men can either save or satisfy their country, without first rooting out corruption by *giving us our rights* (for that, I am bold to say, is the only means) that I cannot even comprehend, [if report have rightly informed us who those men are to be], how, on any other plan, they can even keep their places long enough to do any good.

At a moment so awful, and I trust so auspicious to our liberties as the present, I would to God it were possible for some men to *feel* the importance of parliamentary reformation, when they make it the subject of their conversations; and that they would seek their information as to the *means*, in the CONSTITUTION, instead of Coffee-houses; and in
their

their closets and libraries, instead of Tavern Clubs and the frivolous circles of Dissipation. We should not then hear of so many imaginary obstacles and difficulties from causes too contemptible and derogatory to the human mind to have place amongst any who call themselves gentlemen, much less amongst sages and patriots undertaking to save a sinking empire. The whole of this catalogue of obstacles is as follows. First, the prejudices of *Whigs* in favour of septennial and triennial parliaments; 2dly, A reluctance to part with burgrave domination, and its attendant profits, together with that chain of subordinate interests, by which seats in the House of Commons have hitherto been found so lucrative; and 3dly, The *difficulties* in arranging a plan of elections where *all* the people are to vote.—Good God! The very mention of such despicable considerations and such nonsense is an affront to manhood, and a slander on an age, which, if not an age of stoic virtue, is at least one of light and liberality!

What! When in this tempest of war and calamity, we confide the helm of state to men singled out for their knowledge and wisdom, shall we at the same time suppose them under the dominion of prejudices that we should barely excuse in their footmen?

Shall we trust in men to shield us from a world in arms against us, and yet suspect that they are unequal to the conquest over a paltry pride and a more paltry selfishness in their own bosoms?

Or shall we hope to be extricated from the complicated difficulties and unparallel'd distresses that press on all sides upon this almost ruined nation, by men who find *difficulties* in forming an arrangement for annual elections of the people divided into districts; to which any clerk in any office would be ashamed to confess himself unequal?

But if the suspense at this moment should end in an administration of other men than those that have been wished for by the public, we have only to watch them *at their outset*;
and

and in order to determine whether or not they are equal to the task of government and fit to be trusted, to observe their conduct towards the PEOPLE; for the protection of *whose* RIGHTS, and the faithful management of *whose* AFFAIRS, and for no other end whatsoever, do ministers, and kings, and parliaments exist.

March 23, 1782.

T O

THE PRESENT ELECTORS

O F

MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS.

S E C T I O N I.

GENTLEMEN,

A Short time before the ancient Romans lost their freedom, it was observable, that there was not left any considerable body of citizens, who cared to think and to act for themselves. Forgetting their RIGHTS and their inherent power, they were silly and abject enough, to form no party of their own in favour of their common liberties; nor aspired at any thing higher than cutting each others throats in the service of those intriguing and ambitious senators, who at that time were contending with each other for the reins of dominion. In such a state of things, bribery and faction reigned triumphant, the senate was a market for the sale of men's consciences, and all things good and honourable were sacrificed to the views of the respective leaders. The character of the times, in short, was summed up in this one mournful exclamation; "CÆSAR *bath friends, and POMPEY bath friends; but none are friends to ROME!*" And so in the issue it proved: for the instant that *Pompey* was no more, *Cæsar* became the tyrant of his country. Fatal event! and very fit to be had in remembrance by you, my countrymen; for, from that day to this,

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a period of eighteen hundred years, hath *Rome* continued in slavery and contempt. Nor doth it require much sagacity to pronounce, that such also will be the fate of *England*, whenever it may with equal truth be affirmed, that “ *MINISTRY hath friends, and OPPOSITION hath friends; but none are friends to the CONSTITUTION.*”

I trust, however, that that æra is not yet at hand; for besides the evidences from all parts, that the PEOPLE are making a progress in the necessary work of forming a distinct party of their own, in support of their common RIGHTS; as the only possible MEANS of obtaining such a substantial reform of THEIR OWN HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, as would at once be a redress of our grievances and a security to our threatened freedom; the conduct of MIDDLESEX and the METROPOLIS alone, would amount to a proof that the nation is in no danger, at present, of tamely surrendering up its liberties, and glorious constitution, to any one of the parties amongst the great. Your various assertions of the people's right to be *fairly and proportionally represented* in that House of Parliament, which has no other constitutional existence, than as an elected *substitute for the People themselves*; and to an *annual* revocation and renewal of the power of that substitute, agreeable to justice and according to antient usage; are full demonstrations that you mean to support *Opposition* no farther than *Opposition* shall support the *Constitution*; but that, upon that ground you will support them with all your power.

With regard to the complexion of *Opposition* itself, 'tis so compounded of sundry characters and descriptions of men, that no general idea, much less any definition of it can be given. We may, however, observe that whatever may be the errors or vices of individuals in that body, yet it confessedly contains some great and virtuous characters, who more or less make a common cause with the PEOPLE; in the hope of bringing about such constitutional reforms in the government, as the common rights and interests may require. Thus there may be said to be three distinct parties in the state; the first being the *Ministry* and their dependents; the second, being composed of men strangely compounded of good and ill, but who want those enlarged and generous sentiments, and those strict principles of morality, which could entitle their opposition to our respect, or their characters to our confidence; and the third is likewise, compounded of various materials, but takes in all those

those whose extent of mind qualifies them for comprehending a system of free government such as ours, and whose virtue disposes them to preserve what there remains of it unimpaired, as well as to restore what it has lost of its original and necessary purity. These again, might be farther subdivided, into all those different classes, who, from greater or less application to the subject of reform, from different views of the same objects, and other causes, have hitherto shewn a preference, some to one plan, and some to another, for removing that *corruption of parliament* which all parties, and all men without exception acknowledge to exist.

Having already in other writings treated so largely on the subject, I need not say which description of men in the *Opposition* appear to me to be most masters of their subject and most wise in their conduct. On former occasions, I have expostulated freely and warmly with those I thought to be in an error; and besides pointing out the inherent defects, and necessary want of simplicity, in every plan of reform, not built on the basis of the people's rights and supported on the principles of the constitution, I have ever expressed it as my opinion, that experience would shew the best of such imperfect plans to be utterly *impracticable*; because not calculated to take possession of the People's minds and hearts. Time and events have not yet given me the smallest reason to think otherwise.

To look back to the several attempts at reformation which have hitherto failed, although a retrospect that can give us no pleasure, may yet afford us instruction. I shall only say, that, on those occasions the PEOPLE wanted neither disposition nor spirit; but that, through a forgetfulness of their own *rights*, through the torrent of opinions from all quarters, and such an alloy of selfish interests as might naturally be expected to mix with better motives of action in some of the managers, their first crude and ill concerted efforts have ended only in making all parties wiser.

The business of the People is the plainest and simplest imaginable. They have but *one* thing to ask for. *A constitutional representation*, secured against future abuses, is their *sole* object. Let them stick to that; let them confine their Deputies to that *alone*; and employ as deputies, none but men like-minded with themselves; and then success must speedily crown their labours.

That the latent sense of the people is, and in the nature of things must be, with the *Advocates for their rights*, can scarcely need any proof (and yet it is proved very fully, in your recent Resolutions in MIDDLESEX and LONDON); since it is on those principles alone which they maintain, that the people *can possibly be free*, or have any rational security against mis-government. It may not however be amiss to observe, that the doctrine of *an universal and equal representation in sessional parliaments*, which is the great fundamental right they contend for as the basis and security of every other, has, by the PEOPLE, been received with marks of conviction, on every occasion, that has been seized on, for taking their sense upon it in any popular meeting. In those numerous meetings in Town and Country which lately petitioned Parliament, *the people* in every instance eagerly embraced as much of that doctrine as was laid before them. Nor have there been wanting other testimonies equally unequivocal. But how can it be otherwise, than that the sentiments of the people must be congenial with those of men, whose object is to restore those universal rights of our country, by which the power and dignity of the people would be upheld at their highest point?

Notwithstanding the natural prejudices of aristocracy, notwithstanding the force of habit and the powerful influence of private interests, it is evident that the true principles of reform daily gain ground in the minds of leading men, who had all these impressions on their minds to eradicate, before they could completely assimilate with the PEOPLE, and consider their joint interests as one. In public, as well as private adversity, there is a wholesome quality, which humbles the mind, and disposes it to the reception of truth. It strips inordinate power and court honours of their false glitter, it exposes the empty pageantry of high stations not filled for the good and happiness of mankind, and it tends exceedingly to reconcile ambition and virtue.

But yet there is a pause between the renunciation of error, and the hearty adoption of truth; between first thinking justly, and then acting rightly. Men of consequence have, however, already got so far as to say, "*If an universal and equal representation in sessional parliaments shall appear to be the choice of the PEOPLE, they shall be our choice.*" "When the noble mover* for that vast reform shall again
" propose

* The Duke of Richmond.

“propose it in parliament, we will give it support.” Having advanced thus far in the true path of patriotism, the successive steps in the progress are easy and natural. Being once engaged, they will soon become champions in the cause; having once joined the people, they will soon lead them on with ardour and animation; once acknowledging the people’s rights, and the true principles of reformation, they will not be long ere they will glory in resigning their share of that disgraceful tyranny, which equally oppresses and insults the nation; by nobly sacrificing their private Borough domination to the freedom of election, and thereby giving as unequivocal a pledge as the Duke of Richmond has given, for not having a wish to govern by the *instrumentality of a corrupt parliament*. Men who are ambitious to govern for the good of their country, must, in the course of their reasoning, unavoidably arrive at the conclusion, that there is a necessity for cementing an union with the PEOPLE, upon the just and reasonable ground of *common right and common benefit*. For if parliaments beyond the constitutional limit of a single session, and a mock representation were to remain, what matters it to Englishmen who are to be the King’s ministers? Nor is it within the compass of any human faculties to save this country through the instrumentality of a *corrupt parliament*; or even to redress in any tolerable degree its intolerable grievances. Neither can wise and good men wish to govern by such an iniquitous, such a ruinous instrument. While parliament shall remain corrupt, such men, in accepting the offices of responsibility, would only devote themselves to certain disgrace, if not to destruction. Until it shall be known that there no longer exists that “something behind the throne which is greater than majesty itself,” or that the hearts of the interior cabinet are changed to a love of freedom, and a sacred awe and reverence for the constitution, what means of doing good to their country, or what means of safety to themselves, could be discernible to wise and good men, without the support and protection of an *independent* parliament, truly representing the whole body of the people? Possessed of the affections of the People, such men will ever be supported, when the People have that share in the government which belongs to them; viz.—*the sole election of the Commons House of Parliament, together with an annual revocation of the power with which it is by them invested*. This is a truth so evident, that the first and greatest wisdom of every man, who upon principle takes

takes a part in *Opposition*, must be, to use his efforts for restoring to the Commons their lost authority over *their own* House of Parliament. He who should now aim at being the King's minister on other terms, must in my humble opinion be wretchedly deficient both in wisdom and goodness. Every minister, governing through a corruption of parliament, is no better than a little under tyrant; a minister, not only of a dark interior cabinet, at bitter enmity with our liberties; but of the king of darkness himself; whose infernal ambition it is, to eradicate from the souls of the whole species all remains of the image of God; every remnant, every trace of virtue!—That there are men now in *Opposition*, who, over and over again, might have been ministers, we have reason to be assured. That they did not accept the dangerous trust upon the conditions annexed, *they* have reason to rejoice. And that they never will accept of it, without at the same time providing themselves with the coat-of-mail of a free *parliament*, annually to be purified by election of a free *nation*, I am sure they have reason to determine. But, were there in *Opposition* men now capable of undertaking the guidance of the helm, without this previous repair of the vessel's bottom, I am convinced they would very soon find themselves sinking; for they would have none to support them but the small and feeble band of their own immediate parliamentary connections; since the PEOPLE are certainly tired of backing any party amongst the great, unless for some known and certain good to themselves, previously defined, and agreed on; and appear to be thoroughly satisfied, that it is foolish to think of controuling or removing the *crown's* obnoxious servants, until they shall first have recovered the power of controuling and dismissing *their own*, according to their deserts at the end of every session. And this very general persuasion, that a reformation of parliament is necessary, and must be obtained, is a decisive indication that a mere change of men, as servants to the crown and masters to the public, will never more be an object capable of rousing the nation to exert itself; for it is on the point of becoming wise enough to endure no masters but the LAWS, and no law-makers in the Common's House of Parliament, who shall not represent *a due proportion of the PEOPLE*.

That these are *your* decided sentiments, Gentlemen, appears by your late wise and noble resolutions. They are sentiments which cannot fail to become universally adopted,
and

and to reward your labours with the crown of freedom; since you have Committees for drawing out in detail upon these grounds the plan of your deliverance, and for corresponding with your fellow-labourers in the cause of justice and reformation throughout the kingdom.

SECTION II.

IT only remains therefore, for the People's Advocates, whose object cannot be power without reformation, nor private gain or aggrandizement without substantial good, and lasting freedom to their country, to unfold the real causes of our national evils; and on that subject to speak the truth, and all the truth. Truth and honest information generally lie in a narrow compass. On this occasion, it is contained in four short propositions, as lately circulated all over the kingdom in the following

“ DECLARATION OF RIGHTS,

“ *without which no Englishman can be a free man, nor the English nation a free people.*”

1st. The Government of this Realm, and the making of laws for the same, ought to be lodged in the hands of King, Lords of Parliament, and the Representatives of *the whole* body of the FREE men of this Realm.

2d. Every Englishman (Infants, insane Persons and Criminals only excepted) is, of *common right*, and by the laws of God, a FREE man, and entitled to the full enjoyment of LIBERTY.

3d. An Englishman's Liberty, or Freedom, consists in having an *actual share*, either in legislation itself, or in the *appointing* of those who are to frame the Laws; which, although they ought to protect him in the full enjoyment of those absolute rights, that are vested in him by the immutable Laws of Nature, may yet be fabricated to the destruction of his Person, his Property, his religious Freedom, Family and Fame.

4th. It is the Right of the Commons of England to elect a *new* House of Parliament Once at least in *every* year: Because, when a Parliament continues for a longer term than *one Session*, Thousands, who have attained to man's estate since it was elected, and are therefore entitled to enter into possession

possession of *their best Inheritance*, the actual exercise of their elective Franchise, are in that case *unjustly denied their Right and excluded from Freedom*.

Note 1st. Since the *all* of one man is as dear to him as the *all* of another, the *poor* man has an *equal* right, but *more* need, to have a representative in parliament than a rich one.

Note 2d. Those Englishmen who have *no* votes for electing a representative, are *not* free men, as justice and the constitution of their country require; but are enslaved to *the representatives* of those who *have* votes: For, to be enslaved, is to have *no will of our own* in the choice of lawmakers, but to be governed by rulers, whom *other men have set over us*.

Note 3d. By the operation of *one* unconstitutional statute (8 Hen. VI.) enacted on *false pretences*, a very great majority of Englishmen are tyrannically debarred from their birthright of voting for members of parliament, which was a sacred inheritance enjoyed by their forefathers, *until the enacting of that statute*. Thus, by the craft of statesmen, the far greater part of the English nation are constantly *taxed without being represented, and compelled to obey laws to which they never assented*; which are the very definitions of slavery; and thus are Englishmen degraded to a level with the very *cattle in the field, or the sheep in the fold*, which have *no voice to say*, “Why are we bought and sold! *Why are we yoked and laden with heavy burdens! Why are we fleeced and led to the slaughter!*”

Note 4th. For the making of laws, our constitution knows no such thing as *virtual* representation. Members of parliament are the *Attornies* of those they represent. Who ever heard that the Attorney of *John* shall dispose of the property of *Thomas*, because *John* and *Thomas* happen to reside in the same town or country?

Note 5th. Parliaments of *one Session* were the immemorial usage of England from the earliest antiquity, and our right thereto stood confirmed in the written law of the land, from the time of the immortal *Alfred* down to the reign of King *Charles 1st.* a period of about a thousand years. In all that time, not a single disadvantage to liberty from the *shortness* of sessional parliaments was ever recorded in history; whereas longer parliaments, in about one hundred years time, have left us nothing of liberty but the name.

I hope, Gentlemen, this Declaration is in the hands of every one of you. I hope it holds that place in your esteem, which is due to a measure, that can alone effect your civil salvation. And I hope you will exert yourselves with the generous warmth of Englishmen, to aid and promote
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the circulation of it, till no cottage in the kingdom shall be esteemed furnished without it, till no inhabitant of our island shall be ignorant of its contents. If the crown's *Ministers* who oppress us under those abuses which its truths would correct, can disprove what is therein declared, they may then entertain a hope of being permitted to oppress on : or if any men in *Opposition* can make out any such disproof, then may they also, with more plausibility, continue inactive towards reforming the House of Commons.

Long have we wanted such a DECLARATION, as a *Touchstone*, for enabling us at once to distinguish between public spirit and faction ; as a sure *Criterion* of that zeal for liberty, which is accompanied with a knowledge of what it is ; and as a *Furnace*, for the proof of real patriotism. That patriotism which bears not this test unhurt, is counterfeit, base, and useless to any noble purpose. 'Twere an abuse of words to call him a *patriot*, who held not sacred as the life of his parent, those rights of his country *without which it cannot be free*. How great then is that prostitution of language, which would adorn with the noblest of all civil appellations, men who are avowedly hostile to those rights ; or men who can meanly truck and barter them away, for their own little dirty interests ; upon the men who occupy stations that belong to the patriot only, or that might well inspire with patriotism even sordidness itself ! Let us call then with one voice, to demand their vindication of those common rights of Englishmen, those rights which belong equally to every individual. Let us stimulate the indolent to action, and animate the timid to spirit and firmness. In the thoughtless, let us excite reflection ; and teach the proud and the selfish to blush. And as for those of an irregular and dominant ambition, who think nations made for kings and ministers, if we cannot inspire them with humility, we may at least be their instructors in good policy. If we cannot compel them to feel for their country, we may however prevail with them to feel for themselves ere it be too late !—But they had far better *be* what they would be thought ; and then they might be any thing which it is fit that citizens should be in a free country.

The DECLARATION, you will readily perceive, Gentlemen, is no manifesto of demagogues for factious purposes ; but a plain appeal to the understandings of all men, in favour of truth, justice, religion, law, freedom and peace. It has no regard to the interests, either of *Ministry*, or of *Opposition*

position, otherwise than as they are Englishmen, with the same common interest as others in the constitution. It breathes the true spirit of equity; for it proposes the equal freedom and security of *all*. It intends no elevation nor selection of one party, in exclusion of any other; for in an independent Commons House of Parliament, freely and in equal proportions chosen by *all* the people, every party must be fairly represented, and have that precise weight in the legislature which belongs to it. And then it will be, that those statesmen who are most acceptable to the people will always be firmly supported in office, without bribed votes, or any of those wretched practices, which now taint with corruption, and reduce to debility, the whole service of the state at home and abroad, by making *servility* the grand recommendation to preferment in every department.

I persuade myself, Gentlemen, that you will not like the DECLARATION the less, because it contains no subtle and flattering address to your passions, in order to mislead your judgment; nor attempts, through the medium of your prejudices, to betray your solid interests; but on the contrary, and in order to rescue you from ruin, honestly encounters those prejudices, and tells you fairly that that monopoly of the election franchise of which you yourselves possess a small part, must be laid open to your fellow-citizens at large, *if to be free be worth your care*. In short it solicits not your support either of *Ministry* or of *Opposition*, it attempts not to seduce you into the service of either a *Cæsar* or a *Pompey*; but it honestly exhorts you *to save yourselves*, by taking your own part of the government into *your own hands*; which is the only method to preserve national freedom, and advance the common prosperity, that nature, or the constitution, or the wit of man have yet revealed unto us.

S E C T I O N III.

IF the sacred franchise of annual election† be the undoubted *right* of all; it would be to suspect any one's common honesty, to suppose he could attempt to withhold the enjoyment of it from a single Englishman: and if it be
necessary

† Properly *sessional*, but as it would return only *once* a year, *annual* and *sessional* may be used as convertible terms.

necessary to the common freedom; it would be to impeach his understanding, to suppose him incapable of perceiving that truth. "The political freedom of a community, is the aggregate of the political freedoms of the individuals who compose it. As their several persons collectively, make the community itself; so their several freedoms united, constitute the general freedom." Nothing can be plainer. Now, an immense majority of the people of England, about *nine parts in ten*, § are totally deprived of this freedom, and in a condition which is the very definition of slavery, "governed by rulers whom *other men* have set over them." Under these circumstances can a nation be *free*? The fact is, that it is *not* free; and that proposition is the proof of it. But there is also another proof, that may perhaps come more feelingly home to mens minds; which is, that the people do not freely and voluntarily *give* and *grant* aids, in support of a system of government they approve of; but groan under, and unwillingly pay, an enormous taxation, *imposed* by the *minister* of the crown, for prosecuting amongst other things, a scheme of tyranny in AMERICA, abhorrent from the constitution, and destructive of the obvious interests of this commercial and maritime country.

'Oh,' but it is said, 'the non-electors are *virtually* represented; and have the benefit of the same laws with those who elect the lawmakers.' This mode of reasoning may have its force; but here, the converse of the proposition is the stronger side, by all the difference between *one* and

§ According to the calculations of Mr. Howlet, in his late pamphlet, the number of souls in England and Wales is estimated at little short of 9,000,000, and he tells you that he states it at the *lowest* that his authorities will admit of; as, indeed he appears to do very fairly, and to calculate from very good materials. We may therefore, with propriety enough on this occasion, reckon 9,000,000 to be the number of our inhabitants; a fourth part of which, or 2,250,000 will be the males at man's estate.

2,250,000 males competent to vote.

214,000 voters of all denominations at present.

2,036,000 competent men who are deprived of their franchise.

214,000) 2,250,000 (10 so that the votes are only a tenth part of those who ought to vote.

214,000

110,000

and *ten*, and it ought to stand thus; 'The electors are *virtually* enslaved; because they are subject to the same laws, with nine times their number who are *actually* enslaved.'— 'Oh but,' still it will be replied, 'the non-electors must be *virtually* represented and all be free; because the law-makers themselves are subject to their own laws, and stand on the same ground with the people, in respect of taxation.' But this "*must be*," does not yet follow; nor can either of these conclusions be admitted, until it be first proved, that the Roman people were free under the *Senate* in the times of the EMPERORS, and that no law-makers can be sufficiently base, to sell their own liberty, together with that of their country. But is there really, my countrymen, no difference, in point of taxation, between the law-makers and the rest of the people? By the *red book*, and other public documents, we shall find, that the taxes which a ministerial member imposes upon *himself*, are repaid him not with interest only, but ten-fold, an hundred-fold, full measure, pressed down and overflowing. While voting money out of the peoples pockets to put into his own; while thousands must give up their little indulgencies to feed his pomp, luxury and riot; and while he is buying up those estates, which the common distresses of his fellow citizens compel him to part with *at a reduced value*, I cannot see how he and they 'stand on the same ground in respect of taxation.' But the very term of *virtual*, as applied to representation in parliament, is fit only for the mouth of a driveller||.

But, that taxes are not *granted*, but *imposed*; that nine parts in ten of the nation are defrauded of the election franchise, and the nation *enslaved*, is not all; for, as though this were not enough, that injustice is followed by such a train of other iniquities, in the distribution of the franchise amongst those few who still retain it, as, upon the whole, to constitute the most irritating scheme of wickedness, with which any nation pretending to the rights of freedom was
ever

|| How this term has been misapplied, may be seen by recurring to the science of Optics, from whence it has been borrowed. A *virtual* focus is that point, where converging rays of light *would* center, if they were *not diverted* by refraction or otherwise; but where they never do center. *Virtual*, in this meaning, applied to the representation of non-electors, is most happily expressive of their situation; as descriptive of that representation which they *would* enjoy, if it were *not diverted* by injustice.

ever insulted : being at once a pattern of folly, depravity, and the grossest absurdity ; and yet, *effectual to all the ends of oppression*. To our disgrace as human beings, and to the infamy of our nation, those sacred rights which, unless forfeited for criminality, are every Englishman's birthright, and inherent in his nature as a man ; which are his by the immediate gift of God, dependent on no human laws, nor subject to any *qualifications*, terms or conditions whatsoever ; are, by one despotic statute (8 *Hen. VI.*) and a variety of shameful decisions of your House of Commons, made to depend in one place, on possessing forty shillings by the year in land ; in another, on being an housekeeper ; in a third, on occupying a *particular* house ; in a fourth, on dwelling within the town ; in a fifth, on paying scot and lot ; in a sixth, on boiling a pot ; in a seventh, on being a burges, or the son of a burges ; in an eighth, on marrying a burges's daughter ; in a ninth, on serving an apprenticeship ; in a tenth, on being the tenant to a *large square stone*, marked 1, 2, or 3, in a nobleman's park wall* ; in an eleventh, on paying an *occasional* tax for a royal dog-hole† ; in a twelfth, on sleeping, one night previous to an election, in a *pig-stie*‡, and dignifying it with the name of a dwelling ; and so on, to an almost endless variety of tenures, all of them *arbitrary*, and most of them too absurd for the sobriety of rational argumentation.

This comes of the monstrous doctrine of *qualifications* and *disqualifications*, and where it will end God only knows ; for it would not be either more arbitrary nor more ridiculous, to say ; *this* man shall vote, because he is a soldier in the guards ; and *that* man shall not vote, because he will not swear that kings rule *jure divino*.

Why an Englishman, who happens to excise malt in *Banbury*, shall be free, and the farmer who grows it in the next parish shall not be free—why a cobbler in a *Cinque Port* shall have his franchise, and a manufacturer in *Birmingham* have none—why the most venal wretch in the most venal borough shall be represented in parliament, and not a merchant nor single inhabitant of *Leeds*, *Wakefield*, *Manchester*, or *Halifax*, enjoy the same benefit, I believe no casuists on earth,

* Lord Montacute's, at Midhurst.

† Last Windsor election.

‡ Shaftsbury, and other Boroughs. See *Legisl. Rights of the Com.* vindicated 155.

earth, but the members of an English House of Commons, can determine. And how potwalloping, or occupying of Lord *Montacute's* stone, or sitting down in a Shaftsbury pigstie, is to be the proof of a man's being a *free-born Englishman*, I shall leave those able casuists also to explain. As well might such trumpery, in my opinion, be brought to prove, that any one were a *christian*, and not a pagan; a *white* man, and not a negro; a *human being*, and not a horse. But the disfranchisement of scores of towns, and the largest in particular; the exclusion of one class of men in this borough, and of another class in that; and so on; is but a mere taste of this filthy draught. I know not how you will swallow the whole; but what it is, may in some degree be conceived from the following particulars.

In a Report of a Sub-Committee of Westminster, dated March 19, 1780, it is stated, that

130,000 Freeholders elect	92 Members for 52 Counties;
43,000 Citizens	— 52 ditto for 23 Cities and 2 Universities;
41,000 Electors	— 369 ditto for 192 Corporations
214,000	513

340 of these last choose 50 ditto, and a number scarcely above 6000, actually elect 257 ditto, which is a majority of the whole English House of Commons, and the efficient representation of above *five* millions of people§. So far the sub-committee.

But 257 is a majority of the fullest house, including Scotch members, that ever sat; and their 6000 electors, although spread out into *one hundred and ninety two* Corporations, exceed not in number the male inhabitants of a *single town* of ordinary importance, such as *Leicester* or *Derby*. Who will say it were just, that the town of *Derby* should appoint one half of the national representation? Or that the representatives of *Leicester*, although they should amount to an *efficient* majority of those who met in Parliament, ought to make laws for the whole kingdom, and tax it at their discretion? You would not, Gentlemen, bear this: no man in England would bear it: and yet, under the present

§ The Committee, depending upon former calculations, mention a number far too small.

sent circumstances, the tyranny and the insult is precisely the same.

SECTION IV.

NOR does the very remarkable case of MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS less deserve your particular attention. Containing more than a *tenth* part of the nation, they send only 10 members to parliament; Cornwall, which contains less than a *forty ninth* part, sends 44*. Their proportion is only 10; that of MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS is 50†. Again, 50 is the exact number of members chosen by the 340 Borough electors abovementioned; whereas a majority of the males at man's estate in MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS, is about *one hundred and thirteen thousand*. But you will be pleased to observe, that those 340 persons do now elect five times as many members as MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS united. I believe also it may be shewn, that less than 20 persons can command the election of as many members as MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS, containing a *tenth part of the nation*, have now to represent them‡.

If therefore it now appears, that that House of Parliament which ought to be a full and equal representation of the people; is no such thing, but as different therefrom as darkness is from light, or tyranny from just government, need you wonder that wars should be waged in the cause of despotism? or can you be surprized, that the will of the crown's minister should become an over-bearing law to this land, capable of wresting from you your last shilling, in contempt of your complaints, in defiance of your inclinations?

Can it be law that *six thousand* persons should appoint an efficient majority of those lawmakers who ought to be appointed

* MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS united pay more than a *seventh* part of the national land-tax: Cornwall, less than a *sixty third*. But farther, 42 of the Cornish members are returned by a number of *Burgesses* in the petty Boroughs, whose collective contribution do not probably amount to an *hundreath* part of that *sixty third*.

† See the people's Barrier against undue influence and corruption, p. 95.

‡ Burgh's Polit. Disq. I. 40—44.

pointed by not less than *one million, three hundred and thirteen thousand*, being a majority of *two million, six hundred and twenty-five thousand* electors §? Can it be law, that a *seven thousand, seven hundred and twenty-third* part of these electors (340) should nominate an *eleventh* part of these lawmakers? when the due proportion of that number of which they constitute a majority, viz. 679||, is less than a *sixth part of a single representative**? Can it be law, that a single person, by means of borough property, shall have the power at his sole will to place in the House of Commons five or six, or eight or ten members, to represent him and him only? To prove that such things are *law*, will, I presume, require more logic than all the lawyers in England are masters of†. And I believe they would be somewhat puzzled to prove, that, under these circumstances, we enjoy a free government, or possess the English constitution. It is also a proper question to the men who are thus brought together, by means which a man of sense cannot look on without a blush, nor an honest man without indignation, how they can suppose

§ 2,250,000 for England and Wales.
375,000 for Scotland.

2,625,000 Great Britain.

|| 679
6

4074

* 513) 2,250,000 (4386

2052 4074

1980 312

1539

4410

4104

3060

3078

The number of Electors who ought to be represented by each member of England and Wales; a majority of whom is 2194. For Great Britain collectively the number is still higher.

† "Law is the perfection of Reason."

All English Lawyers.

"The law of England will not endure an absurdity." 9 Co. 22.

pose themselves justified in disposing of the property of the nation, and in making laws to affect the lives of the people.

Lord *North* lately thought his *justice*, his *impartiality*, his *honour* all concerned, to shew that, in common with all other parts of the kingdom, MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS were *equally taxed* †. I would to God, his honour and conscience had been as tender, to have seen them first *equally represented*! Representation, as I conceive, is to be *first*, and taxation to *follow*. Hence every one who is denied his vote for a representative, has a constitutional, and I will add, a *legal* exemption from taxes. If this be not so, reason is useless, and all the maxims of your law are nonsense. If we are to hear any more of *virtual representation*, let but *virtual taxation* go along with it, and then the fiction may perhaps be harmless enough. But fiction and shadow I suppose will not fill the treasury coffers, nor satisfy the cravings of our worthy placemen, pensioners and contractors. Neither will fiction and shadow defend the people's liberty.

As yet, I have said nothing of a parliament's continuing for *seven* years, when it is contrary to law that it should sit more than *one* without re-election. I say *contrary to law*; for no parliament ever had or could have authority to pass an act for that purpose. Such an act and freedom cannot exist together; as the IVth proposition of the DECLARATION demonstrates. Hence, the septennial bill is a *void statute*, a *corruption*, and NO LAW. It is even criminal in the people to submit to it; for therein they betray the rights of their country, and the ever-sacred cause of freedom: and whenever the lower House of parliament, under pretence of that void and wicked statute, presumes to sit beyond the period of a single session, it is no House of *Commons*, it is no part of that legislature which is required by the constitution of England. That House may possibly *declare* the septennial bill to be a good law; or may perhaps *resolve*, that, to say otherwise is a contempt, a misdemeanour, or I know not what: but all that will not change untruth into truth; nor make that just, which in its own nature is unjust.

† When called upon in the House of Commons by Mr. Byng.

SECTION V.

THERE remains yet, in order to complete the picture of a modern House of Commons, to lay before you in its proper colours, the open and bare-faced bribery of its members, which is carried on in the face of day. Crimes sometimes become so very common, that, by the habit of continually looking on them, we lose a sense of their enormity, even in some cases the very consciousness of their existence. It is thus, I fear, with regard to the gross and public corruption of the people's parliamentary servants, against their obvious duty and fidelity. In what those principally consist, none can be ignorant. Representing *the third estate of the realm*, the first of their duties beyond all controversy, is to preserve the *existence* of that third estate. Whenever the commons have not a House of parliament *wholly* in their interest, *wholly* at their devotion, and *wholly* obedient to their will, then it is that a third estate in the realm has *no* existence; but a tyranny of some kind or other is established. They may still indeed, as a part of the animal creation, have a physical existence upon earth; but their political existence, as a free people, is at an end. Since the destruction of *the third* estate can only proceed from one or both of *the other two*, it is the especial duty of the Commons' House to be ever watchful of the Lords and the Crown; to resist their encroachments and to nip in the bud all their attempts against the life or well being of public freedom. And since, of these two powers, the crown is infinitely the most formidable, it is there that the duties of vigilance and resistance in the representatives of the commons have the greatest compass and extent; being commensurate, not only to the immense authority vested in that branch of our government, but to whatever degree of power a prince might aspire to.

This being the case, I cannot see how any man, who is a representative of the commons with this guardianship upon his hands, can presume to hold at the same time under the crown, any lucrative place or employment whatever. Common as is the practice, and great and dignified as are many of those who do thus, I must nevertheless needs think that every such act, is a *corrupt act*; and that in taking any such emolument, they take a *bribe*, evidently contrary to their fidelity. What would be infamous in a *juror*, cannot be
ho-

honourable in a *Member of parliament*. We all know that in an ordinary jury, it is a reasonable ground of immediate challenge and exception to any one, that he is the *hired servant*, the *dependent*, even the *particular friend*, or any other way under the known *influence* of one of the parties: for both our law and constitution abhor the very appearance of partiality, nor will endure injustice in any form or degree. And do we not all know, that an immense number of the members in the House of Commons are the *servants* of the crown and the *menials* of the king, from the first Lord of the Treasury down to the turnspit in the royal kitchen? Nor can we be ignorant that besides these persons so liable to challenge and exception, there are also an host of pensioners and others under *influence*, in the shape of contractors, subscribers to loans, officers of the standing army and navy, &c. not to say one word of those INDEPENDENT COUNTRY GENTLEMEN who accept of nothing for *themselves*, but sponge up places, commissions, livings, deaneries, bishopricks, titles, and all sorts of emoluments for the whole circle of their kindred and retainers.

If such practices would shock our sense of justice and of decency in the pannel of an *ordinary Jury*, which our law intends shall be equally in the interest of *both* parties, how iniquitous and profligate must it appear in a *House of parliament*, which is intended by our law to be the representative of the *Commons ONLY*, and for the more especial purpose of *watching* and *resisting* the crown, and *controuling* its ministers! Were an indigent Farmer or tradesman in quality of *Juror*, when sworn to render justice between two persons, but prior to his verdict, to accept of *five pounds* from one of the parties; would he not be esteemed the vilest miscreant that breathed? Although but *one* of the twelve had done this, *the Verdict being thus effectually vitiated*, would be set aside; and no disgrace would be thought too much to be added to the legal punishment for so atrocious an act. But the great, the wealthy, the honourable *Jurors of the nation*, jurors in the immediate service of *one* party, the Commons, may it seems accept from the *other*, the Crown, of thousands and tens of thousands, of honours, of titles, of power, of every thing that ambition or avarice can covet for themselves and their posterity, without infamy, without punishment, without censure! And their most odious verdicts shall be enforced, although there be scarcely a single juror of the majority by which they are given, but what

stands openly recorded in your *Red Book*, as a constant receiver of court bribes. The same jurors moreover, contrary to the *unalterable* law of the land, shall be kept on the pannel for *seven years* together, and although *jurors for the people only*, shall thus shamelessly stand forth as the hirelings, the dependents, the creatures of the *king's* minister; and in return for fattening upon his good things, shall gratify his every passion, go and come at his beck, crouch at his frown, and obey his nod; constantly and uniformly giving verdicts in his favour, whether the evidence be for or against him; refusing to hear, and yet not hesitating to determine; declaring the examination of accounts unnecessary, and passing in the lump all that come before them; and whatever money he demand, whether for purposes avowed or secret, whether for augmenting his master's unexampled income, discharging the debts of court extravagance (too probably incurred in extending the limits of corrupt influence) or for waging unjust and impolitic war; they shall never fail to vote him out of the pockets of the impoverished people: but when THE PEOPLE, their CONSTITUENTS, their PRINCIPALS, those FROM WHOSE BREATH THEY OUGHT TO DERIVE THEIR POLITICAL EXISTENCE, pray for œconomy and a redress of grievances, they shall treat their petitions with scorn, and the most insolent contumely!!!—Nay, the English nation shall be told that it hath no right to appoint any other agents to act for it, not even *to model its complaints and make known its sentiments*; but must continue to depend wholly on those who have already betrayed it.—Were, I say, such things to be transacted in our *ordinary juries*, would not the feelings of an injured public find expression, and the vengeance of insulted LAW fall heavy on the perpetrators of crimes so atrocious?

In a former publication * I gave a state of the division upon Sir George Saville's motion, in Feb. 1780, for a disclosure of *the secret Pension List*, on which it was suspected might be found the names of some of those *independent* members of parliament, of whose support the minister so often boasted. It was as follows,

In favour of the motion	—	—	188
Against it	—	—	190

But

* The People's Barrier, p. 73.

But when the said 190 came to be properly classed, it appeared that they fell under the following descriptions.

Sons of Placemen, and other very near connexions	—	—	—	26
Contractors	—	—	—	14
Pensioners, avowedly so,	—	—	—	6
PLACEMEN, receiving constant salaries at the will of the crown	—	—	—	94
				140
Members under no <i>visible</i> influence, only				50
				190

So that, had the decision been *judicial* instead of *legislative*, and these 190 had been jurors on the pannel, no less than *one hundred and fourteen* of them (without reckoning the first class of exceptionables) must have been first struck off, before any Court of Justice in England could have proceeded to trial. Are *legislative* decisions, then, of so much less importance than *judicial* ones, that this shall any longer be endured?—Shall the property of an *individual*, even to a few shillings, be guarded by that great bulwark of justice, a pannel of *impartial* and *unexceptionable* jurors, while that of *the nation at large*, in millions upon millions, is continually to be decided upon by jurors *openly hired* to give verdicts for him who pays them?—In *judicial* proceedings, the last outrage that could be offered to justice and decency, would be for the same men to be at once *Counsel* paid for pleading, and *Jurors* to give the verdict; and yet, in all *legislative* causes between the crown and the people, the king's Counsel, his Attorney and Solicitor General, his Lord Advocate, his Chancellor of the Exchequer, and every Lawyer in his service, although *paid for pleading the cause of the crown*, shall nevertheless have votes for deciding the verdict.

I have not yet *classed* the ministerial voters on the late motions of Mr. Fox and Gen. Conway, concerning the management of the Navy, and a Peace with America; but those who shall take that trouble, will see *in part* the astonishing iniquity that is constantly practised in the *High Court of Parliament* against the People.

Let the Lists of the Divisions on those occasions be carefully treasured up by the People of MIDDLESEX and the METROPOLIS,

TROPOLIS, in order that, when any Bill shall be brought into the House of Commons for fully restoring to you the RIGHTS asserted in the DECLARATION, it may be seen who amongst the voters against a *Ministry*, the removal of which might benefit *themselves*, and who amongst the condemners of a war, the ill effects of which they *themselves* in common with others experience, truly deserve *public confidence* on the ground of *public virtue*. It needs, Gentlemen, no *public virtue* to vote against a war so unjust, so inhuman, so ruinous, and so egregiously absurd; but when it is to be decided whether each man's seat in parliament shall henceforth be held on a Burgage tenure, or by a free election of the people, or whether it shall be occupied for seven years or for one, then I grant there will be a real test and trial of *public virtue*. According to the event, bestow your *confidence*.

"Confidence," said the great Chatham, "in aged bosoms, is a plant of slow growth." And when we call to mind the close attendance, the ardor in debate, and the high divisions that on certain questions have frequently occurred in the course of the last ten or a dozen years, and contrast them with the empty house, the vapid speeches, and the insignificant numbers who have ever voted upon Mr. Sawbridge's annual motion for *shortening the duration of parliament*, it is impossible to be very profuse of our confidence, or to give it indiscriminately to all opposers of an obnoxious ministry. But, as the great question of reformation has now been for a considerable time agitated, and the necessity of it is every day more and more apparent, so I trust, that the number of those in whom the people can with propriety place confidence, will also increase, and that upon that question, as well as upon the American War, justice and wisdom will at length inspire a *Majority* in the House of Commons.

But to return to those gentry, who, holding places and emoluments under the crown, are yet modest enough to seat themselves amongst the representatives of the people; let me ask, if these *servers of two masters* do in their own concerns, act upon these principles? Do they, in their law suits, commit their dearest interests into the hands of the very agents and hired instruments of their adversary? Do they see him first pack the jury, and then bribe it in open court, and sit silent?—Oh, Shame, where is thy blush? Oh, thou divine spirit of freedom, that once inspiredst Englishmen, whither art thou fled?

SECTION

SECTION VI.

TO whom then, my Countrymen, shall we look for redress? Where are those who shall restore to us our liberty? Shall we expect it at the hands of *Ministry*?—While they are the very workers of this engine of our oppressions, we can entertain no such hope. Must we then confide in *Opposition*? Alas! No! no! no!—In truth, my Countrymen, it is a vain hope. Have I not already said enough to convince you, that, were they an host of angels or arch-angels, they could not save or serve you; until you yourselves, by an assertion of your own *rights*, shall first have done away *the corruption of parliament*, and thereby furnished them with the only *means* of overcoming the enormous influence of the crown?—Were ever words more applicable to the state of this country, than those of the brave and righteous JOSHUA? “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is AN ACCURSED THING in the midst of thee, O Israel! Thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you!”—But alas! are there not members in *Opposition*, who sit in parliament, returned by *themselves*, for *family boroughs*; are there not others who occupy seats dependent on the *aristocracy*; and some again which have been *bought* with a price;—all parts of the ACCURSED THING? Are there not amongst them children in politics, who have not capacities to distinguish between *cause* and *effect*; and who can discover *no other* political evil wanting *immediate* removal, excepting—the *war*, and the *Ministry*? Like children indeed, with feeble hands they are perpetually catching at the feloes and float-boards of the vehement wheel of power, which revolving with resistless force, dashes them off again without feeling obstruction; while experience ought long since to have taught them, that, in order to moderate and regulate its movements to the good of the state, they should have exerted their efforts nearer the fountain head of the stream that works it, and before it reached the ministerial mill pool, and there have stemmed that overflowing torrent of corruption which gives this wheel such destructive rapidity. Or, if I might be indulged in another allusion, I should observe, that these gentlemen, unhappily fixing their eyes too stedfastly upon the ministerial fortress they mean to storm,

storm, and through extreme ardour for entering the breach, forget, or seem not to know, that they have taken post on ground which is hollow and treacherous with the mines of the besieged, and, which, whenever he pleases to amuse himself with their defeat, in direct attacks upon his power, will sink under them and overwhelm them in mire and rubbish.

As *Opposition* is made up of such various materials, and as there must be a diversity of sentiment amongst the men of whom it is composed, it would be thought invidious were I to attribute to an entire party, the doctrines which are maintained by any one of its members, how admired and respected soever by his friends. Thinking it therefore extremely necessary to examine the doctrines of a much distinguished individual in *Opposition*, I shall do it with freedom, but without ascribing them to any but himself. Mr. *Burke* is the person I allude to. And if I lay before the reader his own words, I trust I shall run no risk of appearing to intend any personal disrespect to that Gentleman, or of misrepresenting his meaning on the subject before us. I must begin then with observing, that the beggarly fragments of a representation, and seats in parliament farmed upon long leases, do not appear to have impaired, in his idea, the constitutional right of that House to legislate for a People, whom, from those causes, *it does not represent*; for he expressly treats the removal of those abuses, as innovations and “capital changes in the constitution*.” He has even positively asserted, that, “*It is not the derivation of the power of that house from the people [commons] which makes it in a distinct manner their representative †.*” He has lightly, and with

* See Mr. *Burke's* Thoughts on the cause of the present Discontents. 5th Ed. p. 95, 98, 99. By this Mode of arguing, whatever has once been enacted by parliament is *a part of the constitution*: nay, whatever change, through the exertions of prerogative or otherwise, has taken place in the state of representation, is also *a part of the constitution*. A blessed constitution we should soon have at this rate! It is because these things are *contrary to the constitution* that they are to be corrected; and it is the duty of every member of parliament, and the first and greatest of all his duties, to use his endeavours so to alter them as to make parliament itself what it ought to be, according to the constitution.

† *Ib.* p. 67. After these extraordinary words, the writer, by way of illustration proceeds thus; “The king is the representative of the people; so are the lords; so are the judges. “They

with no small mystery treated a representation of *the third estate of the realm* as an *undefinable* something, "of a middle nature between subject and government †; and has kindly informed the good people of England, that "The House of Commons was *supposed* originally to be *no part of the standing government of this country* §." It is also a most curious

"They are all trustees for the people, as well as the commons; because no power is given for the sole sake of the holder; and although Government certainly is an institution of *Divine authority*, yet its forms, and the persons who administer it, all originate from the people." By this way of describing our government, that which in itself is plain and simple, is made an incomprehensible mystery. Had the writer attended to the different signification of the words, *people* and *commons*, his language might not have been quite unintelligible. It is in the union of the three estates of the realm, including the whole of the people, or king, lords and commons, wherein resides the supreme power, the power of legislation. In the exercise of this power, the king acts in *person*, and the lords in *person*; but the commons, for convenience, by a *representative*, to be chosen and authorized by themselves, the said commons. The question of *representation* before us, can only have relation to the legislative power: and therefore the Commons House of Parliament, must be "in a distinct manner" the representative of the *commons*; because from them is not only derived its power, but its very existence, and for the purposes of such representation only. When it is said the king represents *the people*, the meaning is, he, as the executory instrument of the legislature, represents the *state*, which includes the whole, but applies not to the *commons* who are only a part. Neither are the commons in *any case* represented by the Lords, or the judges, by Ambassadors, Military Commanders. Consuls, or other persons acting officially in any department of the executory duties; who all of them nevertheless represent the *people*, or *state*.

† Thoughts, p. 66.

§ Ib. p. 66.

This *supposition* contains an excellent insinuation to prepare the minds of the people for the abolition of what is thus *supposed* to have been an *innovation* on the ancient prerogative of the crown; which ought no doubt to be held in all due reverence, if "Government is [so] certainly an institution of divine authority," as Mr. Burke believes it to be. The idea has accordingly been adopted and made the most of, in a pamphlet last year published for Doddsley, Pall Mall; in which *the total abolition of parliaments*, as a gothic and inconvenient invention of our barbarous ancestors,

is

rious idea of this gentleman's, that all *official, professional, military and naval* persons " must be let into a share of representation * " *as such* ; that is to say, as official, professional, military and naval men, by some individuals of their respective bodies sitting in parliament, although *not* to be chosen by those persons of whom they are thus to be *the representatives*, but by others. And he thinks, that excluding *the king's servants* from sitting amongst the *Jurors for the people*, would forsooth be " disconnecting them with parliament " in a way that might prove dangerous to the state§. It is also one of his favourite doctrines, that there must be " horrible disorders among the people attending frequent elections † ; " *aye, " horrible disorders ; " that is the raw head*

is seriously recommended, and said to be the only means by which it is practicable to *reform* our corrupt government. But if *supposing* is to be of any weight, it is *supposed* that, prior to the introduction of arbitrary feudal customs by the Normans, the common people must necessarily have had their share in legislation ; because all historians agree that both the Saxons and the Britons were *free nations* ; which had been impossible without *a share in their own government*.

* Mere flowers of the imagination ; without a shadow of ground in the constitution. Ib. p. 97, 98.

§ Ib. p. 97. I know it is argued that the presence of official men is necessary in that House, in order to give it *information*. And so is the presence of *witnesses*, in a court of justice : but not to sit and give a verdict *amongst the Jurors*. A Chancellor of the Exchequer may be a proper person for the House to consult on the subject of taxations ; but who will say he can be *an impartial Juror* for the people, or a proper person to *vote* the money out of their pockets into the coffers of the crown ?

† Ib. p. 95. Do any horrible disorders arise from the people's meeting *fifty times a year* at divine service ? The same peace and good order must prevail, in electing members of parliament, as soon as the people shall be permitted to exercise *their rights* according to the principles of *the constitution*. Tumult and disorder were never known during many ages before those rights were invaded by the Statute for a *Qualification* (8 Hen. VI) which introduced them. By the *triennial Bill*, they were increased and aggravated to a high degree ; but by the *septennial bill*, although less frequently repeated, they have been *magnified* to a degree of enormity that is intolerable. A single County election but a very few years since cost *eighty-eight thousand pounds* ; which, according to the Duke of Richmond's proposed law of elections, need not have cost eighty pence.

head and bloody bones which is to terrify us from restoring annual parliaments! and that such elections must ruin the independent country gentlemen, and so completely subject parliament to the influence of the crown. This argument however has been little insisted on of late, since its patrons have had this unlucky question put to them; "Then, why does not the *Minister* propose annual parliaments?" Mr. Burke has also declared that "that sort of influence which is *open and visible*," alias, *open and visible bribery*, as I must call it, arising from "places under the government" he would not shut out, when it is not in his power to prevent the influence of contracts, &c. † Besides, in respect to shortening the duration of parliaments and disqualifying of placemen; he decisively says, "I am sure in the present state of things it is *impossible* to apply them§."

Is this gentleman who has so many objections of his own to get over, who sees such mighty difficulties, and even impossibilities in his way, the man we must resort to on this occasion? as *one* of the people, I certainly am not for being laid under obligations to any gentleman for a service which appears to be so much against the grain of his inclinations. Nor do I see the smallest occasion for putting so disagreeable a task upon him; since I conceive it to be the business of *the people themselves*, and a work in which, with proper exertion on their part, there would be found neither difficulty, nor confusion, nor disorder, nor ill consequence of any kind.

As the subject of reforming the Commons House has so very lately engaged in no small degree the public attention, I should not in the year 1782, have attributed to Mr. *Burke* the doctrines he maintained on the subject in 1770, was there reason for supposing that time had materially changed them. Mr. *Burke* however in his letter of April 12, 1780, to a member of the Committee of Buckinghamshire*, puts
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† *Ib.* p. 99.

The same means by which bribing to get *into* parliament shall be stopped—viz. an universal exercise of the right of suffrage; elections by districts of *one* member for each; and annually; will effectually prevent bribing *in* parliament, either openly or secretly; and for this plain reason: the whole revenues of the state would be insufficient for the purpose.

§ *Ib.* p. 95.

* Taken from the public papers, printed in his name at full length. As the same was never contradicted, I have presumed it was an original.

the matter still farther out of doubt. Considering that in 1770 he wrote a book, above 50 pages of which was a dissertation on "the nature and character" of the House of Commons, particularly with regard to "its *spirit*, and the *purposes it was meant to answer* in the constitution," in which he largely treats of its horrible corruption and the means of cure; considering also that, as he says, "He is now growing old; and has from his very early youth been conversant in reading, and thinking upon the subjects of our laws and constitution, as well as upon those of other times and countries;" and considering besides, his extraordinary learning and experience, and still more extraordinary abilities; considering, I say, all these particulars, it surely might not have been an unreasonable expectation, that when the tide of reformation had so strongly set in, he should have been prepared with the full means, formed into a complete plan of reform, and happy in the occasion of presenting it to the public. But after a lapse of so many years since he himself had shewn the necessity of such a plan, he hath it seems nothing further to offer on the subject, than what was contained in his *Bill of Oeconomy*, for the civil list expenditure, excepting some see-saw doubts and difficulties, and discouraging cautions, and a direct refusal to concur in the *only* measures which in the nature of things can possibly effect a reform. *Ten long years* had elapsed since the publication of his *Thoughts*, and ten such years for demonstrating the necessity of a reform as the nation had never before experienced, and yet with regard to a certain proposition in the line of reform he very calmly tells his friend, that, "Nothing ought to be *hastily* determined upon the subject;" that, "He cannot possibly give his vote for it, until he has considered it *more fully*;" that, "On the result of all his reading, thinking, experience and communication, he is not able to come to an *immediate* resolution in favour of a *change* in the *ground work* of our constitution †;" and that, "*He does dissent fully*
"and

† This mode of expression, if it pass without a detection of its error, is admirably well calculated to discourage any attempt whatever towards a radical reform of the House of Commons. Every Englishman is supposed to have such a reverence for the constitution, that he will shudder at the thought of a *change in its ground work*: but, that septennial elections and a mock representation

“ and directly from ANY RESOLUTION WHATSOEVER, on the
 “ subject of an alteration in the representation and election of the
 “ kingdom at this time†.”

But, notwithstanding all the above quotations, I do not, as I said before, at all despair but that Mr. *Burke* and the People's *rights* of election and representation, may yet in due time, and ere long, be reconciled: for really they are not so difficult of comprehension as to occasion any fears on *that* account; and although he may now and then shew a slight partiality for that slippery jade *Discretion*, yet he has often signalized himself as the warm friend of *Justice*.

Those who think it an undeniable proposition, that the present state of the representation and election of the kingdom, is the sole cause of the corruption of parliament, of the presumption of ministers, of the arbitrary power they exercise, and of every political evil now experienced by the English nation, must necessarily be somewhat surprized at Mr. *Burke's* language on the subject. And whether or not, until his opinions shall be changed, he is to be considered as a person to be particularly resorted to, for obtaining us a reform of parliament, is a question, Gentlemen, which it is very fit should be proposed to your serious consideration. But how any member of the House of *Commons*, as a deputed conservator, as a peculiar guardian of the nation's *rights*, can be pardonable for his omissions towards the recovery of them, when, so jealous was our law of such neglects, even in *the crown* itself, that the king at his coronation was required to pledge himself under the sanction of his oath, that he

sensation are the *ground work* of the English constitution, neither Mr. *Burke*, nor any of his disciples can prove. That they are most iniquitous abuses, which, if not *changed* to something better, must speedily destroy both ground work and superstructure, is but too evident to every considerate and impartial man.

† By the words, “ at this time,” as well as others in the same letter, we are not left quite in despair, but that in due course of time Mr. *Burke* may adopt such a change; for says he, very properly, “ It would be dreadful indeed if there were any power in the nation capable of resisting its unanimous desire, or even the desire of any great and decided majority of the people.” And if he means any longer to maintain his old opinions on this subject, he must at least furnish himself with better arguments than he has hitherto made use of.

he would RESTORE THE THINGS THAT ARE GONE TO DECAY*, I shall leave to himself to consider.

Nothing surely in the affairs of human life can be more obvious than the present duty of the patriot; nothing more simple than the means of performing it! A few plain questions will make this appear. In the answers there may be repetitions of what has been already said: but the ideas cannot be too often recalled to your minds. 1. *What is the constitutional legislature of this Country?*—‘A government consisting of *three* original powers; king, lords, and commons; the latter ordinarily acting by a *representative*.’

2. Has this legislature in any respect *gone to decay*, or departed from its constitutional origin and principles?—‘It has. Look back to the foregoing pages. The *representative* part, is no longer that member of the legislature which the constitution acknowledges.’

3. In such a case, what do common sense and common honesty suggest to us?—‘To “RESTORE THE THING THAT IS GONE TO DECAY,” viz. the decayed member of the legislature; and by the rules prescribed by the *constitution*.’

4. But who are THE COMMONS; of whom the Commons’ House is the representative; and by whom consequently it is to be chosen?—‘ALL the people of England, excepting the king and the lords, are the *commons*.’ * God be thanked, there is now no fourth class of men, no *villani*, no *slave*, acknowledged by our law!

5. What is a legal and constitutional Commons’ House of Parliament, or Representative of the Commons?—‘A body of men freely *elected* [not *nominated* at the bidding of others]

* When the Archbishop delivers the sword, he saith, ‘Receive this kingly sword, &c. defend and help widows and orphans; *restore the things that are gone to decay*; maintain those things which are restored; be revenged of injustice, and confirm things that are in good order.’ Richard I, according to Baker, took at his coronation “a solemn oath, that he should observe peace, honour and reverence to Almighty God, to his Church and to his Ministers, all the days of his life; also that he should exercise upright justice to the People committed to his charge, and that he should *abrogate and disannul all evil laws and wrongful customs*, if any were to be found in the precinct of his realm; and maintain those that were good and laudable.”

‘ others] by the said commons ; for the purpose of meeting
 ‘ the king and lords, in order to make, confirm, repeal or
 ‘ annul laws, for the common security and benefit of *all*;
 ‘ and to *assess all* with equity and impartiality towards every
 ‘ necessary expence of government.’

6. Have any part of the commons a natural, a constitutional, or rational claim, to be exclusively or partially the *electors* of this body of representatives ; so that other parts ought to elect in a less proportion, or not at all ? — ‘ Such
 ‘ a question is too absurd to deserve an answer. It might
 ‘ as well be asked, if part of the people were not human beings ; or whether they were void of reason, sentiments of
 ‘ justice, or capacities of suffering. We do not find that
 ‘ those who pretend to an exclusive right of electing the representatives of any county or town, lay any claim to an
 ‘ exclusive right of paying all the taxes of such town or
 ‘ county : and yet one follows the other by necessary consequence ; if our constitution be any thing but a bubble, or
 ‘ our reason better than an *ignis fatuus*.’

Now let any man of common sense and common honesty lay his hand on his heart, and say what is the first and most indispensable duty of a *patriot*. Let every leader of *Opposition*, and every humble follower also, tell us plainly what they mean, when they use the word *patriotism*. Does it signify *mere opposition to a bad ministry*, without a wish for RESTORING THE THINGS THAT ARE GONE TO DECAY ?

SECTION VII.

IF certain men are without *arguments*, they cannot be without *motives*, for not exerting themselves to restore the franchises of the people and sessional parliaments. This reform is certainly a shoe that would pinch somewhere, or their aversion to it would not be so great. It would to be sure cut short their present term in authority ;—it would leave them no other pretensions to the like hereafter, than those to be derived from the good opinion of a free and independent people ;—that permanent elevation to seats in parliament, which now confers on them a something bordering on the dignity and privileges of the peerage, could never again be for more than one session at a time ;—and all those tenures for life, or at will, by which the high station of legislators is held by too many of them, whether respected or
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not respected, known or not known, by those who are called their constituents, would be instantly abolished; and they who now carry themselves on all occasions so loftily, as though, like the peers, they were legislators and rulers of the people in their own right, must take it a little more humbly when they perceived themselves stripped of these self-assumed feathers of authority, and made really dependent for that honour in future, on the merit of their past services in the eyes of the country around them. Besides which, such a reform would put an end to that foul engendering between contrary natures, which teems with nought but pollutions and evils; an union against the spirit and the end of the constitution, which formed them of materials eternally repulsive of each other and irreconcilable; so that, in the event of a change in the ministry favourable to their wishes, they could not, according to the modern custom, imitate those who in Scripture attempted at once to serve God and Mammon, by seizing with one hand, the dignity and privileges belonging to the representatives of the commons; and sordidly grasping with the other, the fat emoluments of office under the crown.

I will not presume to say that these motives operate on many. But I must needs think they have no small weight with some. If their conduct, however, can be accounted for on principles more just and natural, I shall ever be ready to receive the truth. But be their motives what they may, the fact is certain, that they do not exert themselves to restore those *rights of the people*, without which it is nonsense to talk of freedom.

Where being the *Ministry*, is being *masters of the liberties and purse of a nation*, there the virtue of an *Opposition* is always to be suspected; and never wholly confided in, until it have passed the ordeal of some *unequivocal test*: for “even
“ *FACTION* must be at first popular; and popularity cannot
“ be acquired without *the evidence of some good deeds*, which,
“ like Abraham’s faith, may hold the place of Righteous-
“ nesses.”

The plain result is, that with regard to a constitutional representation, *THE COMMONS at large* must take care of their own interests in *that point*: allowing none of those whom they shall employ in a work which is so essential to their
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freedom, any *latitude* of conduct, any *alternative* whatsoever; but exacting from them without abatement, full and unequivocal statements of their RIGHTS, together with vigorous and unremitting efforts towards their *complete attainment*. This, and this alone, I say, must be the conduct of the commons at large in their respective counties; if to be free, or to have a redress of their grievances, be worth their care. It is a part of the great duty of self-preservation, which they owe to themselves and to their posterity. It is their own proper business. It relates to nothing but the bringing of their own servants into the state and condition of servants. Its sole object is to make such servants dependent for their appointment on the fair choice of the masters only, and subject to dismissal at the end of each session, if their conduct have not given satisfaction. The contest being between the commons and their own servants, no other power has authority to decide it; because the commons are an independent estate of the realm, who are to exercise their portion of the sovereign authority through those very servants. None but themselves have the regular *means* to effect this reform. The crown, indeed, has irregular means of great extent: but it is for the commons to judge from their own experience, how far the crown is likely to employ its corrupt influence over their *servants*, to restore freedom to *themselves*. The commons at large, I say, must execute in their own persons, the great work of their preservation: and give me leave, Gentlemen, to add, that to you in a peculiar manner it belongs to take the lead; you who inhabit the metropolis and the populous centre of the state; you who reside at the fountain head of information, and possess the readiest means of communication; you who have the acquisition of no less than *forty* additional representatives to contend for, as the right of your county and city, in due proportion to their numbers; and you who have ever been so eminently distinguished for your intelligent sentiments and spirited exertions in the cause of freedom.

A people intelligent of their own rights, and possessing spirit to assert them, never yet wanted leaders; never yet failed of success. Nor would the commons on this occasion want a powerful party even in parliament itself, had they but once by a proper exertion of their united voice roused it from the forgetfulness of its duty. It only forgets the people, when the people forget their own dignity and importance. With all its modern

omnipotence, it will never at once oppose both justice and the declared sense of an informed people. When virtue is the road to popularity and power, ambitious men will strive to be virtuous. Ministers themselves, who now treat you with so much contempt, in that case would be the champions of your cause; and find as much to say in praise of your patriotism, as lately they did for that of THE SELF-ARMED PEOPLE OF IRELAND, when they perceived them determined no longer to bear oppression. And with truth might they call you the best friends of your country, and the most loyal subjects of the crown: for none but those who sincerely seek to “*restore the things that are gone to decay*” in the foundations of our government, can at this disgraceful period be true to either.

There is a class in *Opposition*, to whose logic I have not yet done justice. These are certain gentlemen, who, in their ingenious designs for improving our political garden, seem, like all other modern gardeners, to have taken a wonderful antipathy to a *straight line*, although it be the line of the constitution itself. With these gentlemen it passes for argument to say, ‘Those who are not for *us*, are for *ministry*; those who reject our infallible scheme for a parliamentary reform little by little, bit by bit, play into the hands of an arbitrary court; and those perverse Englishmen who will not give up their convictions to our *ipse dixits*, their demonstrations to our quibbles, nor their rights to our conceits, are enemies to *unanimity*;’ as though there were no sense, no spirit, no power in the nation, but what are divided between *ministry* and *themselves*; and as if it were the bounden duty of the people, implicitly to receive either one or the other, for their masters. When questioned concerning their curious fancies, for *improving the people’s freedom by narrowing their franchise*; for reconciling us to tyranny, by only *changing its name* from *septennial* to *triennial*; or for stopping one chink in representation, while an hundred wide-yawning breaches are left open for the entrance of corruption, they chafe as though you had done them an actual injury: and when after all their toils, their popularity proves too light to outweigh the influence of *ministry*, they immediately affect to despair of the commonwealth; which cannot forsooth be saved, while the people are so corrupt, so senseless, and ungrateful, as not to demand *them* for their governors.

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I am not singular in thinking that such men are unwise; unconstitutional; uncandid. That To unite with them, is *not* the interest of the people: To follow their lead, is *not* the way to reformation and freedom. Indeed, they seem to be as destitute of ideas upon the subject, as if a *Locke*, a *Burgh*, a *Price* had never written a line. Their's, we are compelled to suspect, is far too much a mere contest with *ministry* for the power and emoluments of office; and it should seem to be a necessary part of their plan, that *parliament should continue corrupt*; so that if ever the power should be obtained, it may be *uncontrouled*, and make them amends for the unprofitable years they have spent in a minority.

I do not however mean to reflect upon such gentlemen, as, through an amiable timidity, rather incline to attempt a partial reform upon the Yorkshire plan, than a complete one upon that proposed by the Duke of Richmond. If gentlemen cannot see that the very magnitude of the latter, when united with its extreme simplicity, shews it to be far the most practicable of the two, I cannot help it. I am sure I do not blame them for following their own judgment; and I am content to wait until *the decision of the People* shall remove their doubts.

In an age of science and free enquiry, and in a country of juries and a free press, it ought undoubtedly to be received as an axiom in politics, that, '*Any reform which is necessary to public freedom, may at all times be effected by an Opposition in parliament; provided that Opposition take the CONSTITUTION for their guide, and possess the CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE.*' That an union upon this ground, of those who are most distinguished for powerful connections and their firmness in rejecting all insidious offers from the dark interior cabinet, must ere long take place, is my full persuasion; because, where there is discernment, truth will work its way; and where there is integrity, it will of course bring forth its natural fruits. It is impossible for well-informed and honest men to retain an adherence to *septennial* parliaments, which stink in the nostrils of the nation, merely because such parliaments were first introduced by the error, or had it even been by the virtue and wisdom of their ancestors! It is impossible that wise and good men, for the sake of a few dirty boroughs, and being at the head of little helpless parties in parliament, should consent to sacrifice their country and consign to slavery all the future generations of Englishmen!

S E C T I O N VIII.

WITH the same independency that, upon constitutional grounds, I would support opposition to misgovernment, and go all lengths in that support, I must ever reserve the freedom of signifying in what particulars I think opposition erroneous or defective. For union in error, I hold to be the brand of ignorance and servility; and sure I am that it leads to defeat and ruin. In honest men I will always place confidence, when they tell me that their object and mine is the same. But until we are agreed what is the object of pursuit, there is no ground for confidence; for a confidence without an object is downright nonsense. When intending to go a journey, I do not get into the first coach I see, be the driver ever so judicious or honest, and confide in his carrying me whither I want to go. If I wanted to go to *London*, he might carry me to *York*, and defeat the end of my journey. To place a general undefined confidence in others, even the best and wisest, is to resign our free-agency and become mere machines. It is dishonourable to both parties. It is contrary to nature; which requires rational beings universally, to be the judges of the fitness or unfitness of their own actions. It is not, surely, any want of confidence in my steward whom I acknowledge to be a wise and honest man, that I do not put into his possession together with the writings of my estate, a charte blanche completely signed and sealed, for him to fill up as he pleases! If I confide to him the full care and direction of my property, expecting only an annual account, surely that is as much as he ought to receive, or I to give. If he sought more; I should certainly give him less. And doubtless the nation, which has so much indifference about who is *in* or who is *out*, while its birthright and inheritance of freedom is with-held from it, is ready enough to place its confidence in such statesmen, as shall become the sincere advocates for its *rights*, and shall unite with it in the endeavour to recover possession of its ESTATE in the government, viz. *an universal and sessional election of representatives*. But since, through the suspension of that right, our liberties and our property have long lain at the mercy of ministers acting by their mercenaries in parliament; 'tis high time

time we thought of something better in the line of reform, than a mere choice of rulers.

Amongst the minority in both Houses of parliament, there are many individuals not *designedly* inimical to the rights of the people; in both Houses, there are men who have on various occasions vindicated those rights with the greatest wisdom and spirit; and in both Houses also, there are an exalted few, with minds always open to truth, and that give a friendly welcome to every light which may aid their patriot steps, in an undeviating pursuit of the true means for restoring and confirming our liberties. One whom I have already named, stands more eminently distinguished than the rest; in as much as, while others were puzzling over a few crude and lifeless propositions for adding a little cohort to the forces of *opposition*; he planned, digested and proposed in parliament, a comprehensive and a glorious law for at once restoring your rights in their fullest extent, as stated in THE DECLARATION, and doing away in an instant the cause of all your oppressions. And this, my Countrymen, he did, notwithstanding his known fidelity and attachment to his political connections, who then approved not of the measure. But that attachment, although founded and continued on the noblest principles, could not prevail over his sense of duty and his convictions as to the rectitude of the thing. He had carefully enquired into the right of the Commons at large, in respect to *the election and duration of parliaments*; and upon the broad basis of those rights he framed his bill. The reluctance, nay the refusal of his friends to support him, was no reason with him for artfully trimming between duty and affection, for shuffling between public fidelity and private interest, nor for awkwardly tacking together reformation and corruption, freedom and slavery, in a ridiculous piece of political patchwork; but, like an Englishman, he dared to think for himself, and, at all events, to attempt that which *he knew ought to be done* to save his country. Almost two years have now elapsed since that attempt; so that ere this it cannot but be, that the self-evidency of the rights he vindicates and the necessity of the reform he proposes, together with the authority of his steadfast and unshaken opinion, and the temper and moderation he has manifested in its support, must have made the deepest impression on the minds of his immediate associates in public business, and well prepared them to give him their hearty aid when next

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he shall attempt to save his country. Your joint plaudit, Gentlemen, of his Grace's proposal, could not fail to overcome every remaining scruple, every reluctance in the minds of the virtuous part of the Aristocracy, and to obtain it a most powerful support in the House of Lords. It ought to be our hope that he will soon again try what can be done in parliament; and as I persuade myself the People of England will not feel less for their own liberties than he has felt, so I trust they will soon assure him that he shall not toil in vain. That he is not in the House of Lords at this time alone, in those just sentiments on which the bill is founded, I know to be fact. Others of rank and ability are quite in readiness to join him. Nor is it upon mere conjecture that I say this. Leaders therefore, in whom you may have confidence,—*leaders whose very success will effectually tie up their own hands from any power that can possibly injure you hereafter* are no longer wanting. Support them, and be free!

SECTION IX.

AS I have referred so frequently to the DECLARATION OF RIGHTS, I beseech you, my Countrymen, to examine it well. Scan the propositions of it by the severest rules of criticism. Search them to the bottom; weigh them, prove them, and contemplate their consequences with all care and seriousness. If not true, reject them; believe them not, until compelled to believe; and if the rights they vindicate be not necessary to freedom, let those rights be still withheld from you, as unworthy your regard. But if, on the other hand, its propositions be true, embrace that truth; if the rights it speaks of be your's, demand those rights; and if the liberty, together with its attendant blessings, which they would restore to you, be worth the concern of Englishmen, then shew, by a spirit worthy of your generous ancestors, that you are Englishmen indeed!

It is this DECLARATION, Gentlemen, that will enable you to decide between the advocates for an *universal and equal representation in sessional parliaments*, and all the other modern reformers of government. Some of these know and admit the rights of the people in both respects; and yet pretend to *serve them* by acquiescing, and even assisting, in the violation of those rights. Others there are, who totally deny that
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there are any privileges whatsoever relative to the election, or duration of parliaments, which the people can claim as absolute *rights*; maintaining that all franchises are to be regulated by *expediency* only: of which expediency they are however modest enough to make themselves the judges. I need not observe to you, that these are the most sturdy champions for septennial parliaments, and the present mock representation of this insulted nation. Now, the entertaining part of this business is, that both of these parties are pleased to claim as much credit for the purity of their intentions, as is due to those who have made it their study to explain, to prove, and to vindicate the natural rights of the people, and who, in all their attempts at reformation, have stedfastly adhered to them, as too sacred to be abandoned on any plea or pretence whatsoever. Those men would have you believe, that it is mere *difference of opinion* which divides the parties; that 'tis impossible to pronounce with certainty, who are right and who are wrong; and that each party is therefore justified in acting as it does. This might indeed be the case, were the points in question incapable of proof: but, on the contrary, it is by the others maintained, that the right of the people to *an universal and equal representation in sessional parliaments* being demonstrated, opinion is out of the question; and hence they infer, that those who adhere to what is demonstrated, are RIGHT; and those who regard it not, are WRONG. Read the DECLARATION OF RIGHTS, Gentlemen, and decide for yourselves!

Affured that truth and justice will ever prove your best advisers, consult them with candour and sincerity. If they shall establish the claims of your disfranchised brethren, to the birthright of voting in common with yourselves in the choice of lawmakers, suffer, I beseech you, neither your own prejudices, nor the insidious flatteries of betrayers, to instil into your minds, that it would be either honest or prudent in you to oppose them. Their ancestors, as well as your's, from the very earliest antiquity possessed this privilege, and exercised it for ages. It was at length taken from them through the treachery of their representatives; who in this act (8. Hen. VI.) did, what it is contrary to reason to suppose any representatives can lawfully do; unless an Attorney, employed by *ten* persons in defence of a *joint* estate, may dispossess *nine* of them to share it between *himself and the tenth*. Now the exclusion of the nine tenths of our countrymen from their birthright of election, was not in-

intended as a means of honourable distinction to your predecessors and to yourselves, who are still permitted to continue electors; but as a stride, and an enormous one it was, towards arbitrary power. Nor can you suppose that the encroachment would have stopped at a freehold of 40 shillings a year, had not experience proved that that exclusion was already sufficiently large, to answer every purpose of the court. Its over officious friends, indeed, have repeatedly advised it, in order to render a certain House still more quiet and manageable, to extend the exclusion to all who possess less than 40 *pounds* a year, freehold; but the Court is wise enough to know, that there may be hazard, and there can be no use, in seizing on more power than ENOUGH. It has reason to be perfectly well satisfied with what it already possesses; and I am persuaded that these over officious persons would recommend themselves more to its favour, would they but keep silence on the subject and let things *go on as they are*. So long as the present contemptible *remnant of national franchise*, reduced, and modelled, and parcelled out as it is, proves neither bar nor check to the crown's minister, in taxing your property at discretion and for any purpose that is determined on, good or bad; nor any restraint upon other exercises of will and pleasure that it is thought fit to indulge in; why should the court needlessly deprive any one of a BAUBLE that pleases him or keeps him quiet? When the minister is advised to farther exclusions, 'Poh! Poh!', says he, 'Let the forty shilling freeholders continue to enjoy their empty *vote*; and then the fools will fancy themselves *free*; Let them be flattered for their consequence, and courted for their *favours*; and then the blockheads will mistake their influence at an *election*, for an influence in the *state*; Let *them* and other electors *alone* be the petitioners to parliament in all matters touching the *popular rights and interests of the nation*; and then they will be silly enough to imagine that *they alone* constitute the *popular power* of the nation; although they are not a tenth part of the people*: address and treat them on all occasions, as greatly *superior* to the *non-electors*; so *their* pride shall be *your* instrument of *division*; and so long as they shall continue divided, the crown's minister cannot be resisted; for a *People divided against itself hath no strength*.—So long, as I can keep the popular rights thus *monopolized* by a

* Meaning Males at man's estate.

' handful of the people; so long as I can keep them so *dis-*
 ' *tributed*, that a handful again of these monopolists in de-
 ' pendent boroughs shall send me a majority of the House
 ' of Commons; and so long as I can make sure of that ma-
 ' jority, by places, pensions, and other douceurs, it would
 ' be nonsense to reduce the number of electors;—and dan-
 ' gerous nonsense too: for, by adding to the present non-
 ' electors, who are now so perfectly quiet, great numbers
 ' in all parts of newly disfranchised persons, vexed and ir-
 ' ritated by their recent exclusion, the fermentation amongst
 ' these latter, might quicken and raise the whole mass to
 ' a sense of their situation, and a demand of those rights
 ' which have been with-held from them ever since the eighth
 ' year of the reign of *Henry VI*; and what is once de-
 ' manded by above nine tenths of the people, must I know
 ' be granted.'

This reasoning, Gentlemen, as applied to the purpose of
 keeping the nation in thralldom, you will admit to be sound
 and conclusive: you cannot, therefore, misunderstand the
 lesson it teaches you. But if a time should come, when no
 active virtue, no regard for freedom, no disinterested spirit,
 no principle of animation nor resistance were to be discerned
 amongst the body of the people; it might then, indeed, ap-
 pear feasible enough to a treacherous statesman to root out
 the election franchise altogether; or at least, by another ex-
 tensive exclusion, to reduce it to an impossibility of ever be-
 ing revived again. Perhaps, Gentlemen, it may be worth
 your while to consider, what, at such a period, will be the
 security of *your* franchise. Perhaps you might then wish
 for better ramparts against arbitrary power, than paper sta-
 tutes, which a minister, who has a corrupt parliament at
 command, at any instant can abrogate at his pleasure.

Remember that, with the same verdict by which you shall
 pronounce your injured brethren *not* intitled to the privilege
 of electing, you will shake your own title to its very foun-
 dation. If the representatives of their ancestors had a right
 to deprive *them*, your's must have the same right to deprive
you. If parliament can limit the nation's franchise by a *qua-*
lification, and thereby strike off whom it pleases from the
 condition of free men; the line of that qualification, in-
 stead of forty *shillings*, may, as already remarked, be drawn
 at forty *pounds* per annum, or *four-hundred*; or at any other

point of property whatsoever*. Thus, instead of 2,250,000 Electors, we now have only 214,000; and by the same means they may be reduced to a smaller number than the members whom they are to elect. Beat back, then, the daring encroachment in time. Enlarge the basis of your freedom to an extent that shall take in every Englishman; so that *it may be the interest of every Englishman to defend it*. Consider what a vast proportion of your countrymen, by being degraded from the level of free citizens, have not an interest in common with yourselves to defend your freedom; but are naturally taught to look with an eye of envy and spleen on that franchise, which, in the language of the immortal *Shakespeare*, "*not enriches you, but makes them poor indeed!*" Nor let it escape your most serious attention, that almost wholly out of this class, is formed your standing army. Never having had any participation with you in the privileges of free men, and now wholly cut off *for life* from the mild protection of the Common Law, to be governed by an arbitrary code, what interest have the soldiers of such an army *in common* with you? What motive have they for defending *your* liberties, which are *no liberties to them*? In *France* and in *Prussia* it is notorious, that a native soldier is a less enslaved character than in *England*; where it is his birthright, and the highest wisdom of his country, that he should never lose a participation in the blessings of freedom.

SECTION X.

IF *the present monopoly* of the election franchise would prove to *the electors*, a security against arbitrary power and an exemption from taxes they disapproved of; and if all the inconveniences of ill government were to fall only on the *disfranchised*, you might then indeed have some inducement to think it was no business of *your's*, to remove *their* burthens; nor concerned *your* interest, that *they* should be free: but since it is this very disfranchisement of your brethren, which is the cause of *your* oppressions; and since every burthen and every evil which it brings upon *them*, must be equally felt by *yourselves*; you cannot too soon re-instate them

* In Scotland, I understand that in some Counties the electors do not exceed thirty or forty in number, and that the qualification is £.200 or £.300 a year.

them in their birthright. When the *main body* of a free people, by its loss of the election-franchise, is *disarmed*, the few remaining battalions with all their pride of superiority as electors, must ignominiously pass under the yoke, and submit to every indignity with which the conqueror thinks fit to insult them.

But we, my Countrymen; who do still retain this empty privilege of a seven-year's vote—the *last dregs of exhausted liberty*—should be utterly unworthy that freedom we hope to recover, did we harbour a wish to withhold it from a single Englishman. Like the elements by which we exist, or like the knowledge of that Being on whom we depend, Liberty ought to be equal and universal; the common lot, the common blessing of all. This is a law of nature that we cannot violate with impunity. As the punishment for our too long acquiescence in the wrong done our disfranchised brethren, and for our pride in the invidious distinction of being the *free* holders of counties, and the *free* men of corporate towns, by which it is implied that all others are wretches without a right to share in the freedom of their country, we now find that, for want of *their* assistance to baffle corruption, *our own* liberties are wantonly trampled on, and our property is invaded to the utmost wish of ministerial rapacity.

As to the *end* of our boasted franchise, it surely is not, that we may compliment an acquaintance with a feather for his cap, nor that we may send to parliament this, or that particular man of knowledge and integrity, to see the interests committed to his care made a sport and prey of; but, it is—**THAT OUR NATION MAY BE FREE.** As English liberty is the right of us all, and as this liberty is the *end* of which the election-franchise is the *means*, every Englishman must have a right to vote; for in every right to an *end*, a right to the *means* is included. A people only enjoy freedom when governed by such laws and when they pay such taxes as are assented to—not by persons whom *other men have set over them*, but—by themselves, or by their representatives, that is, legislators in whose elections they enjoyed the privilege of voting. Are a tenth part of the nation in this situation? Every nation is either free or not free. In which of these predicaments, are the People of England?

So far as *your own personal experience* extends, do you find that the laws, and the taxes, and the measures of ministers,

are generally to your mind? Do you, for instance, know any honest reason why the minister, in negotiating a single loan, should corruptly divide amongst his hired majority in parliament and other friends, seven or eight hundred thousand pounds belonging to the people of England, who are to be taxed forever to pay the interest of it*? Do you approve of an Act, by which the most innocent man amongst you may be imprisoned during ministerial pleasure without his *Habeas Corpus*, and consequently without the means of defence against false accusers, provided a wretch can be found to swear, that *he has cause to suspect* the party has been guilty of rebellion in America, or piracy on the high seas? Do you see any cause, but the cause of tyranny, for so dreadful a statute to hang *in terrorem* over the heads of the whole kingdom for years? A statute which, in as much as it defeats every provision of our law for *personal security*, and leaves every subject a defenceless object of treachery or vengeance to bad men, is in itself an evil infinitely greater than any it is *pretended* to be a guard against. Do you think there is even a shadow of pretence for such a law *here*, from any difficulty that exists in bringing to justice any pirate or other offender against the laws of the land? If no such difficulty exists, nor is pretended to exist, is not such a law the very essence of despotism? If the system of government, of which this statute and this loan are specimens, and a war which has annihilated *three hundred and sixty-six* MILLIONS of money\$, are not much to your mind, do you know any cause why they should be any better relished by other parts of the kingdom?

But what avails it, Gentlemen, that you have *one* representative annually to move for the rescinding of an arbitrary resolution of a former House of Commons, which
daringly

* See An Address to the Public, by W. H. Hartley, Esq; Member of Parliament for the County of Berks.

				£.
§	Added to the funded and unfunded debt			100,000,000
	Reduced value of the Funds	—	—	40,000,000
	Ditto	—	Land	200,000,000
	Ditto	—	Houses	26,000,000
				366,000,000

See an Address to the Committee of Yorkshire, by D. Hartley, Esq; p. 13.

daringly violated the most sacred principle of your constitution in the case of the MIDDLESEX election? What avails it, that you have *another* who annually moves in like manner for shortening the duration of parliaments? Or what avails the eloquence of a *third*, or the tried integrity of a *fourth*; or indeed the united wisdom and virtue of the whole *ten*? Are not the other FORTY which belong to MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS appointed by the minister and the lordly proprietors of the rotten boroughs; whereby your own forces are turned against you, in the proportion of four to one? What avails, in like manner, the County-representation throughout the kingdom, when the children of corruption who inhabit the meanest of the rotten boroughs, and who all together exceed not in number the male inhabitants of *one single market town* of ordinary size, send to parliament a *majority* of the fullest House that ever sat?

Can you expect free government, while such is your House of Commons? Can you hope for an æconomical expenditure of public money, while the elected and their handful of electors are thus linked together, and confederated with ministers, in a joint scheme of plunder and depredation upon the public property? Can you dream of the abolition of sinecures and useless places, while those who obtain them through corruption, and who hold them through servility and baseness, are to decide upon your Petitions? — What, then, in the name of common sense is the remedy, but that you secure to yourselves a *constitutional* representation?

By a *constitutional* representation, I mean a representation answering the same ends of protection to *freedom* and *property*, as would take place, provided the state were small enough for the people themselves to sit personally in parliament. This, you will agree, is truly desirable; and probably you would not hesitate a moment in entering on the undertaking, did you but see the *means* as clearly as you see the *justice* of it. You may remind me, that you have already tried what the crown, the parliament, the ministry, and the opposition, either could or would do towards the easement of your burthens, and the redress of your grievances; but you have tried in vain. And to what power, able to serve you, shall you then appeal?

SECTION XI.

I AM ready with an answer.—Appeal to that power which, by the constitution, is vested in the body of *the Commons at large*:—that very power which constitutes them THE THIRD ESTATE OF THE REALM; of which (without any distinctions whatsoever, of rich from poor, of land-owners in fee from copy-holders, burghesses from other inhabitants, or the like) the House of COMMONS, as its name expresses, is THE REPRESENTATIVE. The king and lords excepted, *all* the rest of the nation, are the COMMONS†: and *the House of Commons* is THEIR house. A *complete* and *equally proportioned* representation in that House, is their undeniable RIGHT. It is impossible for sophistry to explain away so evident a truth. A right to an *end* includes a right to the *means*. The commons at large, then, having this right, they have a right to complete and to equalize their own representation: Or, in other words, they have a right *in common* to reform by the rules of equity, the appointment of those who are their *attornies in common*, for the security, management and improvement of their *joint* estate in THE CONSTITUTION AND LIBERTIES OF ENGLAND. As I have said before, it is because the Commons at large are *the third estate* of the realm, with its portion of the sovereign power necessarily *independent* of the other two branches, that its right to correct the abuses in its own representation, is absolute and indefeasible. *If there could any where exist a right to prevent this*, it must be a right to destroy the constitution: it is evident therefore that no such *right* can exist; and that any *power* which should prevent it, would be an arbitrary power; as well as a complete evidence that the constitution was already destroyed. Supposing only for argument's sake, that the legislature by its *united force* should prevent the commons from thus correcting their own representation, or rather, from changing that which is a counterfeit into a true representation; such a legislature might undoubtedly still be a *legislature*, because, as the word imports, it would make *laws*; but it as certainly would no longer be an *English parliament*, nor any thing which either the people or the constitution of England acknowledge—

† See Blackstone's Commentaries, I. 403. and all our Law Books without exception.

knowledge. A legislature of king, lords, and 558 men appointed by the crown, by the lords and a few individuals of the commons, but expressly disapproved of by the bulk of the nation, is *not* the legislature of ENGLAND: and thus to set up, in the teeth of the commons, as *their* representation, and *their* DELEGATED sovereignty, that which they themselves disclaimed and protested against, would be a contradiction in terms, and too gross an invention to impose upon the most stupid of mankind. So much for the sake of the argument; but it is not to be thought that any power on earth can prevent the people from securing to themselves a proper representation, provided they will use the plain and peaceable means which the law and the constitution have put into their hands. The same independent right which the commons of all England have to correct the inequalities, the defects and abuses of the general representation of the kingdom, you also must necessarily have to correct that of MIDDLESEX and the METROPOLIS, which is your proportion of the whole; and to you, as I have already observed, it belongs to take the lead and set the patriot example to your country. Fifty representatives are your right*. Elect them, with a limitation of their services to the session; and see who will venture to shut the doors of parliament against them. He who should do it, would dissolve the English government; which is erected upon, and held together, by this one principle; LAW TO BIND ALL, MUST BE ASSENTED TO BY ALL, EITHER PERSONALLY OR BY REPRESENTATIVES. Besides which, there are principles and maxims without end, which establish it as an immutable law of nature, and consequently the *unalterable* law of the land, that they who are *not* represented in parliament, cannot be lawfully taxed by parliament; in addition to which I may once more repeat, that an *equal* representation is so evident and indispensable a principle of justice, that it needs only to be mentioned to be assented to.

Against

* An union with SURRY would increase the number to 61; since besides the 5 for Southwark, she is intitled to 11 others. (See the *People's Barrier*, p. 95.) At present 14 are elected in Surry, but not *by* Surry in equal proportions; for 10 of them are exclusively chosen by a number of electors in the boroughs of *Blechingly*, *Gatton*, *Guilford*, *Hafslmere* and *Ryegate*, whose due share of representation, is somewhat short of *half a member*. See *Polit. Disq.* I. 43.

Against an equal and complete representation, besides mere *borough prescriptions* and resolutions of one House of Parliament, there exists but a single statute; and that a void one. It is *void*, not only because the recital in its preamble, as the ground or reason of what was to be enacted, was a *gross and infamous untruth*, which vitiates any law; but because its operation would annihilate those original inherent rights of the people over which parliament has no power; and which, except for insanity or some heinous crime, no man can forfeit. But there is a still more invincible argument, (if any can be stronger than these) which is, that the House of Commons which assented to that statute, was only a *proxy* delegated and authorized by the Commons of *that time*; and consequently the power it had of concurring in laws, was not its one original power, but the delegated power of *those* commons. Hence it is manifest, that if it were lawful to make use of that power for disfranchising those to whom it belonged, it is lawful for the servant to turn the master out of doors, or for the steward to vest in himself the estate of his lord.

The principle of this monstrous statute goes to the total annihilation of a third estate of the realm; for if, on the tyrant plea of *expediency*, one description of men may be disfranchised, so may any other, and every other. One crafty courtier says, 'Strike me off all below a freeholder of forty shillings, and then we shall be rid of *eighty-four* in every hundred of these fellows *pretending** to freedom;' another thinks that not sufficient, and that it would be more *expedient* to draw the line at forty pounds. This might perhaps reduce the remaining sixteen to eight or ten. Then comes your opposition man, and in order to increase the freedom of boroughs, 'Away,' says he, 'with all excisemen and custom-house officers, who vote under ministerial influence.' 'Right,' says another; 'and for the same reason it will be *expedient* to exclude all persons in public offices and all who serve in the navy or army.' To which the courtier rejoins; 'It is very true; but if you take away one influence pray remove another, by clearing away all servants and tenants.' And thus, Gentlemen, the *Electors* of England may easily be reduced to as small a number as the *elect*ed; as is actually the case in *Old Sarum*; and very *expedient* it would be no doubt!

* *Pretending* to freedom is spoken of, in the preamble to the Statute, as *offensive*.

SECTION XII.

BUT when you shall in earnest set about the work of restoring to yourselves a *constitutional* representation, you will see the propriety of beginning with that defect in which there is an *apparent* partiality *in your own favour*; you will see the necessity of disregarding the statute of 8th Hen. VI, which being void cannot bind you; as well as all those unjust and I will add *illegal* partialities, by which the present exclusions of Englishmen who never forfeited their franchise for any criminality are effected. The odious distinction between men *free* and men *not* free, as contrary to the constitution, contrary to the maxims of your law, contrary to justice, contrary to reason and contrary to the principles of political self-preservation, must be consigned to eternal oblivion, and your fellow subjects in MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS of all degrees and denominations invited to share in the common freedom, and to join with you in the election of your FIFTY representatives. Without this leading measure, you will have no foundation whatever to stand on. It is only by including all the *inhabitants* of MIDDLESEX and the METROPOLIS, that you have a right to the *fifty* representatives: and whatever ground of prescription or statute might be offered for a monopoly of the election rights still to remain in *your particular body*, on the very same ground, will the most extravagant monopoly now enjoyed by the least of the Boroughs be defensible; and the whole system of corruption must remain untouched by the hand of reformation.

There is, however, one very important consideration, to which it behoves you to pay due attention. If, in correcting either the general representation of England, or that of your own districts of MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS, the present *non-electors* should be still excluded from voting, the act would not be valid: for it would not be the act of THE COMMONS, but of a very small part only, factiously and illegally contending for partial privileges and partial interests. The present *non-electors* making a very great, an immense majority of the people, it is impossible without them to give existence to an *act of the Commons*, whether of the kingdom or of a distinct county. It is the very circumstance of

H

uniting

uniting with them by which only you can be enabled either in a *lawful* or a *practical* sense, to recover your liberties. In proceeding without them, your attempt would infallibly be crushed: for as you would then be acting illegally, the crown would have the *law* and the *constitution* on its side; while your injured brethren would have neither interest nor inclination to protect you. Do you, therefore, prefer, in conjunction with them, to elect the *fifty* representatives which belong to MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS, or, by your present monopoly of the franchise, to be the electors of *ten* only, while the other *forty* are still to be appointed by your oppressors? Or the question may be put thus; Do you rather choose that the *forty* additional members which ought to be added to MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS, shall continue to be appointed by the minister and a few lords whose interests are at enmity with yours, or by your at present *non-electing* fellow citizens whose interests are and ever must be the same? For, in respect of *your* numbers, as *Freeholders* of MIDDLESEX, *Liverymen* of LONDON, *House-keepers* of WESTMINSTER and *Burgesses* of SOUTHWARK, even *ten* members are more than your due: so that, restoring to the *non-electors* their birthright of English freedom, could in no sense be said to interfere with *your particular pretensions* to the election franchise you now possess: and you might still, if you preferred it, continue to elect your own *ten* members separately as you do now; taking care only that they, in their respective districts, elected the other *forty* representatives which are the proportion due to their superior numbers. Once more, then, I appeal to your own understandings, whether it would be most advantageous to the liberties and the interests of the Commons of England, that those *forty* representatives should continue as at present to be elected by the creatures of the minister and a few proprietors of rotten boroughs, *who have no right to elect them*, or by your at present *non-electing* brethren in MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS, *who have a right to elect them*.

Remember, my Countrymen, that you are now driven for aid to *your disfranchised fellow-citizens*, as the very last resource in favour of your expiring liberties. For Heaven's sake then, be not so insatuated as to make *them* your enemies too; by persisting at such a moment in your injurious monopoly of a franchise belonging equally to them as to you; but of which they were robbed by your *common enemy*, for the purpose of your *common destruction*. Don't imagine
that,

that, in their disfranchisement by the statute of *Qualification*, &c. what was taken from *them*, was given to *you*. No; it was given to your natural enemy, the crown*: and your political existence depends on your restoring it to your natural friends the *non-electors*. The franchise was the joint inheritance of THE COMMONS AT LARGE, as *one body* and a *distinct estate* of the realm; and the taking away a part of it, was a robbery from the whole, for the direct purpose of enslaving the whole; and therefore by the whole, the act ought to be equally resented.

Nor, I beseech you, my Countrymen, let any lurking pride or prejudice cause you to imagine, that *raising* your fellow citizens would be *lowering* yourselves; for in serious truth you are already as low as an enslaved people can be, excepting the name only; and nothing can raise you any more to a state of real freedom, but *their assistance*. If to abolish the odious distinction which expressly marks them as *not free*, were to abridge your privileges; if to make them once more respectable, were to lessen your dignity, I should be pleading against myself; for I am both a Burgess and a Freeholder; and I trust, Gentlemen, that none amongst you have a higher sense of the privileges and dignity of freedom than I have. It is because I set on them a proper value, that I would pursue *the only means which are left* for their *recovery* and future security; means equally pointed out by justice and by common sense.

But let me speak to you in a parable.—‘ Certain brethren dwelt together in one house and had great substance; and all their substance was *in common*. They had substance of lands, of flocks and of herds, and much merchandize. And of their substance they gave continually, and without grudging, to repair, to strengthen and to beautify their house: and it was a goodly house within and without, and glorious to look on. And the Lord God of their fathers who had given them this house and all their substance, commanded them, saying, *Watch ye in the night season*. But after certain days they watched not. And it came to pass, that certain men came privily by night, and

* An enemy, in as much as in *power* there is a natural tendency to abridge *liberty*: hence it is admitted, that if the power of the crown should meet with neither check nor controul from the power of the people, it must necessarily degenerate into despotism.

entered the house, and found the brethren sleeping. And
 they bound *the greatest part* of the brethren: insomuch
 that those whom they left unbound could make no re-
 sistance. And these men said unto the Brethren, We are
 sent by the Lord God of your Fathers to be rulers over you,
 and we will rule you according to the customs of your fa-
 thers: but these were lying words; for they were robbers.
 And these men spoiled the Brethren for a long season, and
 took from them whatsoever they would. Nothing that their
 hearts lusted after did they not spoil them of. Now unto
 certain of those brethren whom they left unbound, they
 gave garments of honour, and they made them rulers,
 and lords, and captains, and judges over their brethren;
 and they gave them gifts of the spoil of their brethren;
 much silver and gold and precious stones. And they
 waxed hard hearted and exceeding proud: and they
 took greater spoil of the brethren when they had little
 substance than when they had much. And when all the
 substance of the House of the brethren was almost spent,
 the lands, and the flocks, and the herds, and the mer-
 chandize, and all that they had, and there remained very
 little of all that the Lord their God had given them;
 and that all the substance of the brethren, of their sons,
 and of their sons' sons to the latest generations was
 pledged to the money-changers, for money taken by the
 rulers at usury and spent, it came to pass that they re-
 membered the words which he spake unto them, when
 he commanded them saying, *Watch ye in the night season*,
 and they humbled themselves before the Lord, for
 they were ashamed. And they prayed unto the Lord
 with one voice, saying, Lord, we are afflicted, have
 compassion on us. And there arose one amongst them of
 those that were not bound, and he said unto them; Bre-
 thren, we have offended the Lord our God, because we
 were not thankful for the good things we had received,
 and did not obey his voice when he commanded us, say-
 ing, *Watch ye in the night season*; and for this cause he hath
 delivered us into the hands of these that spoil us. They
 spoil alike the unbound with the bound, and they mock
 us; for how can we make resistance while our brethren
 are bound? But be of good courage; for ye know that
 while all of us were free, and obeyed the voice of the Lord,
 they had no power over us. Now, therefore, we that are
 unbound will set free you that are bound, and so we shall
 get

' get the mastery: and when we have driven away the
 ' spoilers we will for ever after *watch in the night season*.
 ' as the Lord the God of our fathers commanded us. And
 ' the words pleased the brethren, both those that were un-
 ' bound and those that were bound; and their hearts
 ' burned within them; and they did as he said unto them;
 ' they that were not bound set free those that were bound;
 ' and there was great joy in the house of the Brethren that
 ' day. And it came to pass when the robbers saw that all
 ' the brethren were free, that they fled before them; for
 ' the robbers were a small company, but the brethren were
 ' many.'

S E C T I O N XIII.

AS a leading step towards a similar event in favour of
 the Commons of England, who are political brethren
 with rights *in common* and a common interest, nothing can
 be more proper than to circulate effectually THE DECLARA-
 TION OF RIGHTS. By the paths of unchangeable truth and
 justice alone, it leads you to reformation and to liberty.
 By other means than those it points out, you may indeed
 remove a ministry or new-model a parliament; but by none
 other can you be free. Freedom and those rights which THE
 DECLARATION asserts, are by an eternal law of nature made
 inseparable. They cannot exist asunder. Be true, then,
 to those sacred rights and be free! Set but the example in
 MIDDLESEX and the METROPOLIS, of *unbinding your brethren*,
 and the oppressors of the kingdom shall soon flee before you!

The proposed reform would injure no man; no not one:
 neither would it invade the privileges of the peerage, nor
 encroach on the prerogatives of the crown. On the con-
 trary, it would restore to one its former dignity and respect;
 and to the other, its faded lustre; by recovering to the
 constitution that happy ballance of the three estates, on
 which the rights, the independence, the glory and happi-
 ness of each respectively depends. It is adverse to none;
 but to those who are adverse to the common rights of hu-
 manity, and unnaturally prey upon their own species. It
 leans to no party in particular; it favours no faction; it
 knows no partialities; it promotes no political dissensions:
 but with equal regard it embraces every interest in the state.

Surely,

Surely, then, it merits, and will shortly obtain, the support of all honest men of every party and denomination!

If to make war with vigour, or peace with success, be desirable; we must adopt a reform, whereby the true sense, and spirit, and energy of the nation will be concentrated in the Commons House of Parliament, and a period consequently be put to our national divisions. Or, would we conciliate with AMERICA—that greater object to us than the conquest of a world! the same course must be pursued. It is with the king and ministry, not with the crown and constitution; with the parliament, not with the people of England; that AMERICA is at war. Let her see but the Commons House of Parliament appointed by the people themselves, and her present dread and abhorrence of our government will cease. And in INDIA too, would we recover the confidence and affections of millions, we must let them know that in *England* there is no longer a corrupt House of Commons, to receive and to shelter in an infamous impunity, every man who comes from that fruitful but unhappy land, more than commonly loaded with their spoils and their curses.

When by every consideration that can interest a nation, whether of right or expediency, of justice or of policy, of empire or of commerce, of war or conciliation, we are thus called upon to exercise our undoubted and *independent* right, to place in parliament a *constitutional representation* of ourselves; there is not a moment to be lost. Every neglected moment sacrifices something that might be gained, or something worth securing. There is no pretence for delay. Our all is at stake. There is nothing of doubt, nor difficulty, nor labour in the whole progress of our business. Our way is open before us, and straight and plain: our object is full in view and distinctly seen. No difficulty, no obstruction can cross us, which we have not a right and a power to remove.

If *ministry* and the present defective House of Commons, radically defective, as containing at best but a mock representation of the commons and of the worst kind, and now continuing contrary to the constitution and our rights beyond one session—if *ministry*, I say, and this House should be ambitious of sharing in the honour of the great act, and wish to give it the usual formalities of an ordinary law, I see reasons indeed founded in the constitution why it ought not in strictness to be so; for this is a work proper to the
commons

commons only; and such a representation of themselves as they should elect according to their rights, according to justice, and every principle that gives life to our law and constitution, must necessarily take place of, and supersede to all intents and purposes, a mere mockery of a representation, a substitute in the appointment of which there is scarcely a remnant of free-election left, and in which every principle of justice, of law and the constitution are violated in the grossest manner, and the rights of the people set at nought; *had it not even sat out its session*: but if, nevertheless, these reasons, weighty as they are, should be waved, for the instant, perhaps no ill consequence might ensue; since the first constitutional parliament, by ratifying the defective law would give it validity. Such a concurrence on the part of *ministry* and the House of Commons need not occasion the smallest interruption to their other labours, nor divert their attention many moments from the operations of the war; since A SINGLE STATUTE would suffice, and there are those to frame it who have no official duties to take up their time.

If, however, *ministry* and that House, which is called the *Commons* House of Parliament, should think proper to take a contrary course, and turning from the many foreign enemies they have already brought upon the kingdom, should, at the same time make direct and open war upon the *rights* of the whole commons of England, and *the independency of the third estate of the realm*, if, I say, they should neglect every business and every duty in order to put a stop to this necessary reform, what could it avail, IF THE COMMONS STILL RESOLVED TO PROCEED? For '*they are but a small company, and the commons are many.*' If *ministry* and the *Commons'* House of parliament could prevent our becoming once more a free people, to what end should we carry on any war or repel any invader? Tyranny is tyranny: and it is of very little consequence in what language its edicts are registered; whether English, Dutch, French, or Spanish. If not free; we have no government, no constitution, no country to fight for; ourselves and all that we have been accustomed to call our own, being the property of others.

To make, or to enforce, any unjust statute against *the independency of the third estate of the realm*, is one of those things which the sovereign power of parliament itself has no authority to do, and for this self-evident reason; because it were a direct subversion of the constitution. In like manner, to make or enforce a statute against those unalienable rights

Rights of the commons, which are essential to freedom and to the said independency of the third estate (which as already observed, includes every man excepting the lords and the king) is as certainly beyond the authority of parliament; because it were unjust and has a direct tendency towards such a subversion of the constitution. When parliament through *inadvertency* exceeds its authority, the people will always patiently wait till the wrong be undone; they will even preserve the forms of respect, when the wrong bears evident marks of tyranny and insolence; but cases certainly may be supposed, in which it would be contemptible in the people, not to treat even parliament with contempt. Were parliament, for instance, like the proud Assyrian, to pass a decree, that every man should forsake his God and worship a calf, on pain of being cast into a fiery furnace, I presume its decree would be laughed at instead of obeyed; notwithstanding we have been told by a great oracle of the law, that parliament is *omnipotent* and "can alter the established religion of the land*." Or, were it to enact that no person hereafter should appoint his own domestic *servants*, nor in a law suit choose his own *Attorney*; but that they should be nominated for him by the constable or the clerk of the parish, and, although ever so dishonest and insolent, kept in his service and at his cost for a seven-years term without any power in him to dismiss them, would not such a law be treated with contempt and disobedience by the common consent of the people? Then why not with common consent treat with contempt and disobedience every law to force upon us for a long term of years, *parliamentary servants and attornies* whom we the Commons collectively have not chosen, and whom we cannot trust; since we see them every day wasting our property with the most profligate and wanton excess, and for purposes ruinous in every sense to our interests, and abhorrent from the genius and principles of our government?

If parliament hath any remains of virtue and wisdom, it would silently acquiesce in an act of self-enfranchisement on the part of the commons at large; for it well knows the weakness of its present title to authority. It knows, for the same reasons that I have warned *you* against partial proceedings, that a *minority* of the commons of England have no right to appoint legislators and tax-masters over the *majority*;

* Black. Com. I. 161.

majority; it knows, that those who in any shape were concerned in the appointment of the 513 *English* members of the lower House, do not amount to 220,000, and that the Commons of England, who are males at man's estate, amount to about 2,250,000 (being a fourth part of 9,000,000 souls*) or more than *eleven times* the former number; it knows, that this alone proves that no constitutional House of Commons exists; but it knows also a thousand other causes from which the appointment of that House is effectually vitiated.

Thus, Gentlemen, have I endeavoured to shew you the extent of your wrongs, and the means of redress: whereby it is evident, that by asserting your rights to *an universal and equal representation in sessional parliaments* the election franchise of MIDDLESEX and THE METROPOLIS would instantly become *thirty-five* times as great as it now is, or equivalent to a positive gain of 3500 *per cent*; since they ought to have *five* times as many representatives as at present, and to elect them *seven* times as often.

This alone, independent of consequences, is surely an object worthy your most strenuous exertions: but when, to yourselves and your posterity, there is included in the question, all that is comprehended in the glorious word LIBERTY, there is no price at which it could be purchased too dearly.

Your affectionate fellow-citizen

And faithful servant,

JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

P. S. THE People's equal right of suffrage, and of annually electing a new parliament, is not more evident, than the mode is simple and convenient.

1. The 513 seats in the House of Commons to be proportionally divided amongst the Counties, according to their numbers respectively; as in the following table.

2. Each

* See Mr. Howlet's pamphlet.

2. Each County to be equally subdivided, with regard to its inhabitants, into as many Districts, as it was entitled to elect representatives; and each district to return *one*.

3. The election in every District to be regularly made on the 1st Day of July in every year; so that the whole House of Commons should be chosen in one day.

4. If any Disputes should arise (which could scarcely happen when bribery was foiled; and a man's being a *man*, and an inrolled inhabitant of some parish in the District should be his only *qualification*) such disputes to be finally determined by a special jury of the County at the ensuing assize; which, on that account should always be held between the 15th of July and 15th of September.

5. Parliament to meet regularly on a fixed day in November, unless sooner called together by proclamation in cases of urgency.

A TABLE of equal representation according to the numbers of the People in the time of *Davenant*.

			Males of 21 and upwards	Proportional Number of Representatives
Bedfordshire	—	—	12170	5
Berkshire	—	—	16996	6
Bucks	—	—	18688	7
Cambridge and Ely	—	—	18629	7
Cheshire	—	—	25592	10
Cornwall	—	—	26613	10
Cumberland	—	—	15279	6
Derbyshire	—	—	24944	10
Devonshire	—	—	56202	21
Dorsetshire	—	—	17859	7
Durham Bpk. and Northum- berland with Berwick	—	—	53345	21
Essex	—	—	40545	16
Gloucestershire	—	—	34476	13
Herefordshire	—	—	16744	6
Hertfordshire	—	—	17488	7
Huntingdonshire	—	—	8713	3
Kent	—	—	46674	18
Lancashire	—	—	46961	18
Leicestershire	—	—	20448	8
Lincolnshire	—	—	45019	17

Carried forward 216

				Males of 21 and upwards	Proportional Number of Representatives
Brought over				—	216
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	26904	10
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	17818	7
Norfolk	—	—	—	56579	22
Oxfordshire	—	—	—	19627	7
Rutlandshire	—	—	—	3661	2
Salop	—	—	—	27471	10
Staffordshire	—	—	—	26278	10
Somerset and Bristol	—	—	—	45900	18
Southamptonshire	—	—	—	28557	11
Suffolk	—	—	—	47537	18
Sussex	—	—	—	23451	9
Warwickshire	—	—	—	22700	9
Worcestershire	—	—	—	24440	9
Wiltshire	—	—	—	27418	11
Westmoreland	—	—	—	6691	3
Wales and Monmouthshire	—	—	—	77921	30
Yorkshire	—	—	—	121052	46
Surry	—	}	—	40610	11
Southwark	—		—		5
Middlesex	—		—		25
London	—		—		10
Westminster	—	}	—	111215	10
University of Cambridge	—		—		2
Ditto Oxford	—	—	—	—	2
					513
Scotland	—	—	—	—	45
Total House of Commons					558

50

F I N I S.

[illegible]

